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THE UNIVERSITY'S ALTERNATIVES

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Basically, the mission of the university is to improve the thought process of people and the level of knowledge with which they operate. This does not necessarily mean a high level of involvement in controversial issues and a resulting high fever on every campus in the world. The university may be getting more involved in more of today's life than it should. Many people are looking for whipping boys and places to thrust problems for which they have no answers. To make our universities a residual for all the social conflict in the world is a mistake, and the fundamental objective of these important institutions should be restudied. These institutions have had a somewhat specialized function over the years, and any basic change should be undertaken with proper care and study.

Let me hasten to add that a university must be alive. It must be cosmopolitan if it is to do its job. The means by which our cosmopolitan world interacts with our educational process is one of the great social problems of our age.

My comments will concentrate specifically upon the land-grant universities. I hope to sketch roughly some of the alternatives for the land-grant universities and their personnel. These alternatives will be sketched in a policy framework for choosing alternatives as taught to me by my two important tutors, J. Carroll Bottum and J. Byron Kohlmeyer. I will suffer the same fate as they inevitably do—that of having their favorite alternative discovered. If this occurs, I will feel that same delight that they try to hide. My alternative courses of action for the land-grant universities will be seven. Let us discuss each in turn.

1. *Specialize about their historical clientele—the agricultural and mechanical sectors.* Here I suggest that they take a narrow role concentrating on commercial agriculture. Let me say parenthetically that I will fade in and out with regard to agriculture versus the other functions of the land-grant school, but I am going to concentrate on agriculture. This would be a specialized but an advanced role. The role would be scientific and sophisticated, not vocational only nor technical only. Possibly this is already a satisfied clientele. I doubt it. It is not at all clear who will feed the world or educate the trades either in our affluent society or elsewhere around the world. This approach would

attempt to make American agriculture the model of the world and prepare rural kids for a productive and hopefully happy life.

This alternative is quite feasible. It is not absurd. However, it is not fashionable and lacks the general appeal of many of the other alternatives being proposed. A great danger is the probability that land-grant people will ignore this alternative and abdicate this to vocationally oriented state schools and give agriculture a second-class type of scientific and educational base.

2. *Specialize about the type of education that they have pioneered —applied, people-needed, and mission-organized.* This would probably mean that they would preserve their historical organizational mix of research and education. They would educate the commercial types. They would be prone to shift resources socially, and they would be service-oriented to a personalized clientele. But this would probably not be an agricultural or mechanical clientele.

To define priorities for new clienteles is extremely difficult. It would be even more difficult to limit the number of clienteles to get efficient use of resources. Even with a much more widely expanded resource base, this would still be a problem. It might help some if we could seek related clienteles first, but this is not at all clear. It would help some with this approach to stay somewhat specialized and shift only nominally with regard to clientele, but the alternative assumes a shift in clientele.

A paramount reason for this alternative is that we have great expertise for the types of problems that plague today's society. This expertise apparently is transferable both domestically and internationally. It is an extremely scarce resource in our society. We must not scuttle this institution that has so much expertise at the very time the demands for special expertise are at the apex.

This alernative is feasible and attractive. It might mean more emphasis on method as contrasted to subject matter. Our method has been successful. This alternative is difficult to define and much more difficult to manage than alternative one.

3. *Diversify their program coverage, educationally and service-wise, about their historical clientele.* This would mean stripping away the commercial constraints and not worrying that agricultural schools were set up primarily to foster agricultural technology. Agricultural economics has already eroded this concept. It would mean expanding the number of disciplines that would be applied to agriculture. Areas such as law, merchandising, and group behavior would be brought to bear on agricultural problems. Rural poverty and foreign trade would

get greater emphasis. It could mean greatly expanded resources and an overt attempt to diversify the source of funding. This would provide some assurance for agriculture, which cannot protect its funding in traditional ways. In its minority position agriculture just cannot carry the weight it has historically.

This would probably mean greatly expanded interdisciplinary studies. It would obviously shift resources from the production areas to the social areas. It would broaden the international aspects of our work. It would consider much more directly the externalities in agriculture.

This alternative is feasible. Resources to fund it will come hard, and it has all the dangers inherent in specializing on a minority group. The burden of selecting this alternative rests on the case that agriculture needs specialized treatment in an exchange society. It also requires a considerable shifting of emphasis from the technical to the social. So far, agricultural administrators have been unwilling to make such a shift, particularly in the research area.

4. *Diversify clientele-wise but stay program-wise with the core of the land-grant model of education, probably adding some new programs.* The relative number and types of disadvantaged are more obvious now than when agriculture and mechanics were singled out. Actually, the demand for service by the disadvantaged is insatiable. Many could use the services of the land-grant system. Interestingly, commercial agriculture at this time needs the land-grant system much more than the land-grant system needs commercial agriculture.

Problem similarities are striking and even more complicated and diverse for each new clientele than they have been for our historical clienteles. Funding possibilities here are attractive. Acceptance by many of these groups would probably come quickly and would be quite satisfying. The leadership for education in several of these clienteles might well drop in our laps. This would probably mean adding several new types of programs which could conflict with traditional academic priorities. These would involve issues such as service bureau type of programs, direct consulting both by individuals and for total programs, brokerage functions in the educational field, specialized programs such as vocational training, and interdisciplinary efforts where the function would be primarily organizational so far as the land-grant personnel were concerned.

This alternative is feasible, but it will take much organization and discipline. There would have to be a vigilant effort to improve programs and conventional institutions. Land-grant people would be

competing directly with others for clientele. They would run risks of being overexpanded in too many areas.

5. *Establish an alternative that would be a combination of alternatives three and four.* This is basically what we are doing now. Frankly, without a wider fund base or more efficient resource use, we are inevitably weakening our programs. The greater diversification of program and clientele can mean only a watering down with current resource probabilities and current ways of using our resources.

The great problem here is lack of appropriate and adequate guidelines to assure that we diversify only so far as we can specialize. The organizational arrangements in our traditional land-grant school are inadequate from a managerial point of view to do a good job of this alternative.

This alternative could be discussed in considerable detail, but I will try to turn some of the problems here into a positive nature in my last alternative.

This alternative is probably completely unsatisfactory. It likely is not socially acceptable and would lead to serious depreciation of the land-grant status, respect, and effectiveness.

6. *Disband the land-grant institutions and let society shift these resources to a new institution.* Education evolves out of the conditions of its time. So does an establishment. Increasingly, it is becoming apparent that there will be great argument in this country about disbanding proven establishments for completely new ones. The alternative is to alter and work within the current establishments. My bias is to alter establishments unless it is clear cut that an absolutely new one is needed.

This alternative is not feasible. The establishments have proven themselves. They are part of our society. They have certain partisan vested interests that are probably justifiable from a social point of view. They are viable. The personnel are a unique resource, extremely valuable for current problems.

7. *Reorganize the land-grant resources in such a way as to maximize their contribution in one of the above alternatives or some combination of two or more of them.* Possibly you will say that this is a slightly different order of alternatives. Regardless of whether it is or not, it has to be considered before you can choose properly among the above alternatives.

The current land-grant university organization is lacking. Top and middle management is often weak. These schools have developed

a tremendous bureaucratic organization, and this is becoming worse and worse. The scientific focus on management is weak. The somewhat "folksy" idea of a land-grant school has given it an operational technique not too unlike that in many churches. This is inadequate for the large-scale, large-budget, and complicated organizations of today. A multiheaded responsibility has developed in the organizational scheme. An academic sophistication impedes efficiency. Policy and operational techniques are poorly defined. Uncertainty is killing staff and department head efficiency throughout the system.

Only a strong growth industry such as education would permit the existing institutional deficiencies. The formula type of funding inherited in the land-grant system tied into our state-oriented politics has led to a failure to optimize that the public can no longer afford.

There has been essentially no market analysis for the products of our land-grant schools, and there is little raw material selection, quality, and control.

The land-grant school organization has had a conservative bias due to the fund sources and clientele with which it has worked. The fund base in these universities is narrow, and it is a shrinking one. Unless strong work is done to diversify the funding base, these institutions are going to be in real trouble. There is now public accountability of a type that the land-grant schools have not had before. Any type of solid evaluation will show that this organization still has great assets, but it is going to take management and a much stronger demonstration of appropriate use of the resources entrusted to it if it is to survive in its traditional strong posture.

The organization has some great assets. It has people of great dedication and a feel for important current problems. It has excellent facilities in many cases, including buildings, formula funding basis, and contacts with many of the powerful people within the state. It has a philosophy of working together, a solid loyalty, and a general philosophical thrust that is not true of most other academic groups. It is a manageable establishment. It is not so large but what it can be managed, and there is still plenty of opportunity to see that it is managed.

This alternative would subject the institution to an analysis of its appropriate level of program and its appropriate specialization with regard to clientele. The basic constraints under which this analysis would be performed would be somewhat as follows.

First, market would have to be examined. The clientele for our particular programs must be considered. Many of our traditional

Cooperative Extension Service programs no longer have a clientele. Many of our Ph.D.'s probably do not have a strong market. Much of our research is for a narrow clientele that probably does not want the research or does not need it. On the other hand, there is a strong new group of people who want the types of programs that the Cooperative Extension Service can provide. A careful analysis might show a much greater need for the land-grant schools to be turning out Ph.D's in agriculture than B.S.'s. Well coordinated programs of tight discipline orientation and research would probably make a lot more sense than going in a broad general direction.

The processes must be considered as a constraint in any analysis. The limits of controversy must be considered. The involvement in public decision making is an obvious part of this, but a movement into straight controversy, without some overt reason, appears unwarranted. There are the limits of time. There are the limits of resource and development, and many other in-house needs that must be considered. There is a strong need in the process to consider the importance of preserving the interface between people and program at the departmental level. Movement away from departmental organization should come only after serious study.

The objective function of the universities must be considered as an important part of the analysis. There appears to be a need for a much improved product line with specialization around the thought processes and the development of a greater body of knowledge. The analysis of Bonnen where he shows three circles of influence for the university in teaching, research, and public involvement is a good one. However, I seriously question whether the university should move vigorously into the public involvement sector. I feel that teaching is the great function of the university and that the research function is necessary to keep it viable and alive. This does not mean that I would pull in my horns and do nothing but these key functions. On the other hand, I would have the university take on the change agent function primarily to improve the education and research. I recognize that, to some extent, this may be heresy in this group, but I feel that it is a question worth asking.

Some of the constraints involve questions of product definition. It is time we face up to the difference between community development and agricultural policy. We should face up to the issues of applied economics as contrasted to agricultural social sciences. It is time to talk seriously about the difference between multidisciplinary work and interdisciplinary work. The whole notion of joint products makes these definitions extremely important.

I like the list of characteristics of successful educational systems as laid out by Bonnen. They need to be applied to the organization of the land-grant university. Some of his success criteria raise real questions. He talked about programs and their development. The whole notion of technology as contrasted to technocratic structure and thrust as developed by Galbraith is important. He talked about institution building. It struck me that institutions are always being remodeled. We seldom look at the actual cost of that remodeling. He talked about a delivery system. Salesmen have always been highly paid in an exchange society. We must evaluate this function particularly as the system changes. He indicated that there should be a cónscious, planned thrust. Evolving land-grant systems must be more definitive in goals, organization, and objective functions. He indicated that choices must be made.

In part, I am saying that these issues are so paramount within the organizational structure itself that emphasis on alternatives for the land-grant schools should be on reforming their own programs before they attempt to reform society. This would mean some tight assessment of the tendency of our land-grant schools to turn themselves more and more into action or change agents in society. This would result in a refinement and improvement of their historical functions of teaching and research. In such a way they will maintain the strength that comes from bringing expertise to bear on public decision making. They have the expertise and I want them to use it. But, I do not want them to lose it in the process.

PART II

Policy Issues for the Seventies