INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH
AND
ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

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PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF
INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH
The purpose of this paper is to discuss three related, although perhaps seemingly disparate, topics: the progress of our association, the future of institutional research, and what I see as an overriding concern for higher education which may well shape the future of our discipline.

I shall begin by reviewing the progress our association has made since its inception. The framers of our constitution, Bob Hubbard and his able committee, designed a document which accomplished two purposes: it established a charter for the Association which was so clear that all members could espouse and adhere to it; and it allowed a latitude for the first officers of the Association, headed by John Stecklein and Jim Montgomery, to translate the mandates of the Constitution into effective executive action. These officers have been assisted behind the scenes by a host of members of the association, who have served for the most part without public recognition, in aiding the translation of a document into an organization. The work of these pioneers is evidenced by your attendance tonight.

The accomplishments of the past year are many. The Secretary of the Association, a man who had devoted countless hours of effort in the discharge of his duties, has contributed immeasurably to the growth of the Association. Under his leadership, the Membership Committee has framed guidelines for membership—full, associate, and honorary—which were presented to you at registration. In my judgment, these proposals translate the intent of the constitution committee into workable rules for determining eligibility for membership in the Association.

The duties of the Secretary are arduous and have been conscientiously carried out only through evening and weekend effort and with the assistance of a competent and loyal staff. It is apparent to the Executive Committee that financial assistance must be given to this officer to employ clerical help in the discharge of his duties. The Executive Committee is committing funds from next year's budget for this purpose. And I would submit to you that we are not far from the time when a future Executive Committee will submit for your consideration a proposal that an Executive Secretary be employed to carry out some of the functions now fulfilled on an overtime basis by Dr. Tincher.

The Executive Committee also commends the services of the Treasurer of the Association who, in filling the unexpired term of the elected treasurer, has established a system of fiscal control which not only elicits the approval of our auditors, but more importantly, provides the Executive Committee with regular reports of the exact status of our treasury. After a period of mild recession, if not depression, our treasury has shown marked improvement and is now in a robust condition. Many long hours are also involved in the discharge of the treasurer's duties. To assist him I am proposing to the next Executive Committee that a Committee on Finance be appointed—to be used in an advisory and auxiliary capacity as the Treasurer deems appropriate.

I need not speak of the effectiveness of the work of your Vice-President. The quality of the program in which you are participating and his air of harassment and harried demeanor attest to the work he has performed in our behalf.
The other members of the Executive Committee, the past president, and the members-at-large have faithfully and conscientiously assisted the other officers in the performance of their duties.

You have received the publications of the Association. The Proceedings of the last Forum, under the editorship of Galen Drewry, were scholarly, timely, and extremely well received. Lou D'Amico has kept you informed of pertinent activities and events through the Newsletter, and Cameron Fincher, through some legerdemain, managed to get the second edition of the annotated bibliography into your hands when you registered.

Editing the publications of the Association is a labor of love which largely goes unmentioned and unnoticed. For three years, you have received service from Clarence Bagley, the editor of the Association. Clarence's term of office expires at the end of this year. As you know, the office of editor is an appointive one, and I am pleased to inform you that the Executive Committee has authorized me to announce their appointment of a new editor to succeed Clarence. Cameron Fincher, of the University of Georgia, at least for the moment mentioned and noticed, has agreed to serve as the second editor of the Association.

The Executive Committee appointed this year a committee on monographs under the leadership of Al Cavanaugh. You have seen their report, and I can assure you that it is being given careful consideration by the Executive Committee. I hope you will share your opinions concerning the report with the Executive Committee. Monographs can be expensive. They can also provide considerable enhancement to the image of the Association. The question may be one of expense versus image. The Executive Committee must decide, and your counsel will be appreciated.

Those of you who were at Athens will recall that there was an impassioned appeal for the establishment of a Committee representing the Association to attack the many problems associated with the transmission of data to state, regional, and national organizations. We all recognize that this is a most grievous problem. Responding to Bob Wright's eloquent oratory, the Executive Committee appointed a committee on data standards, and following a time-honored tradition in higher education, asked Bob Wright to chair the committee. This is not a problem to be solved in one year. The Committee is being continued and will present a preliminary report tomorrow.

During the year, the Association was asked to send an official representative to a number of meetings of other professional educational organizations. In addition, responses were also made to send a representative to the inauguration of three university presidents—including that of Dr. Malcolm Moos, coauthor of one of the standard references for all of us. Would that John Stecklein were available to represent us there.

While speaking of our first president, may I report that under his leadership our association has sponsored two workshops for newcomers to the field of institutional research. One, with the co-sponsorship of SREB, was held in Baton Rouge; the other, with assistance from IRCE, will be held in Minneapolis in June. Both were supported by a grant from USOE. Your Executive Committee hopes to extend these workshops next year. Therefore, it is my conviction that our Association has survived its infancy and childhood and is emerging from adolescence. I am well persuaded that the loyal support received from the Executive Committee and from all of you will enable me to provide the next president with a mature educational organization—one well deserving to take its place alongside our colleagues with kindred interests in improving higher education.
Let me turn now to what I see as some developments for our discipline in the future. The role of institutional research is changing. Once we felt that when we had developed expertise in faculty load studies, cost analysis, studies of student characteristics, enrollment projection techniques, and faculty characteristics, we had mastered our craft and had identified the parameters of our field of study. I submit to you that such is not now the case in a number of institutions and will not be the case in most institutions in the future. Let me iterate a few of the functions which I see institutional research beginning to perform and which will be required in the future.

I need not spend extensive time on the whole new field of simulation devices. Your program chairman shares my concern that these new devices be studied and has provided for an examination of them in the program. But just as their significance is stressed by their appearance on the program, I call your attention to them here. The new computers have provided an opportunity to simulate a variety of changes in our institutions and to calculate the effects of these changes in only minutes and seconds. We must identify the components of the educational process, we must learn what relationships exist between and among them, and we must learn how to manipulate them to effect improvements in our institutions. We enter, and some of us have helped to create, a world of simulation devices, mathematical models, program budgets, and opportunity cost analysis. We must learn to live in that world or lose our effectiveness.

Secondly, and again our program reflects our concern with the problem, we are beginning to learn that we must study the impact of higher education on the society it serves. This world, which we are also entering, is a bewildering and somewhat frightening one. No longer will it suffice to say that we made our contribution to society by producing x number of baccalaureates, that we are the bastions of academic freedom, that society has given to us the charge to do basic research, and that in some magic way we provide public service to community, state, nation, and world. If we are to continue to secure the support we require, we must find new and ingenious ways of identifying and reporting our activities, our products, and our impact. Dressel and Benson have said it well; I take the liberty of underscoring their observations.

Before the birth of AIR, at a Forum in Minneapolis, Dr. Francis Horn, then president of the University of Rhode Island, aroused the ire of many in attendance by stating the position that the proper role of institutional research was to give advice to the president and central administration on problems which they were required to solve. Many waxed eloquent (in seminar rooms, corridors, and bistros) and maintained that the proper role of institutional research was solely that of providing objective analysis, not to propose a solution. We are learning that such is not the case. Who is to say "nay" when a president asks: "What do you think I should do"? A long harangue about the necessity for noninvolvement and institutional research as a modernized version of blindfolded justice will send the president packing with a muttered observation about doltishness and perhaps a mental note about a replacement. If we have made an intensive study of a problem confronting our institution, at that moment we know more about that problem than anyone in the institution. To deprive our superiors of the benefit of our advice is a disservice to our institution and to our profession.

As a corollary to our role as advisors to the administration, I see an increasing involvement for institutional research in the creation of policy and planning documents. Institutional research has the overview of the institution which is essential to the development of policy formulation and planning which
takes all facets of the institution into consideration. In addition, the institutional research office has another essential ingredient for sound planning—time. The president plans on airplanes and in terminals; the institutional research officer is freed from operational responsibilities and given the luxury of time—time which should be spent in planning.

Just as I see an increasing role for institutional research in advising the institution, I see an increasing involvement in providing advice to outside groups. I predict a steadily increasing stream of institutional research officers on accrediting teams, consulting with institutions (hopefully sometimes with an honorarium attached) on curriculum, data processing, and institutional self-study. Developing institutions, federal agencies, and foundations will also continue to seek the advice of institutional research officers concerning self-assessment and evaluation of programs and policies. Nor will our services be restricted to this continent. In the past John Dale Russell, Paul Dressel, Joe Saupe and others have served as consultants overseas; John Stecklein is currently on a mission to South America; and next month my wife and I leave for two years in Afghanistan, where I will serve as advisor for administrative services to Kabul University. Others will follow.

Finally, let me turn to what I consider an overriding problem for institutional research. I speak of the concern of students and faculty about university governance. We meet tonight just across the bay from a distinguished institution which first bore the brunt of student unrest and rebellion against authority. While we are in conclave, on the other side of the continent another distinguished institution is still in the throes of agony caused by insurgent students.

We may speak glibly of model building, economic output, and program budgeting, but we must never forget that universities are composed of and exist for people. And we must never forget our concern for people. We must learn much more than we know about the people we call students, and the people we call faculty, and the process we call education. To direct your attention to some of the dimensions of this problem, allow me to quote from a few sections of a most provocative book, The Student in Higher Education, a report of a committee appointed by the Hazen Foundation.

One of the great indoor sports of American faculties is fiddling with the curriculum. The faculty can engage in interminable arguments during years of committee meetings about depth versus breadth. They can fight almost without end about whether educations be providing useful or liberal knowledge. They can write learned books and articles about the difficulties of integrating human knowledge at the time of a knowledge explosion. New courses are introduced, new programs are offered, new departments are created (to quickly become vested interests of their own), sequences of courses are rearranged, honors programs are introduced, teaching loads are adjusted, and a grand and glorious time is had by all.

The harsh truth is that all this activity is generally a waste of time as far as providing a better education for students is concerned. There is no evidence to date that young people learn any more or any less, no matter how their academic curriculum is arranged. The controversy over curriculum gives the faculty something to do and serves their need for neatness and elegance.
For curricular reform to be effective, it must have as its primary reference point the student and his developing personality. It is interesting to speculate on what model of man many of the more ingenious and elaborate proposals for curriculum reform are based. Many of these proposals leave the impression that the student is a first cousin of Adam Smith's economic man—a rational passive absorber of information.

Despite some external differences (concerning university organization), the organizational structure of many modern higher educational institutions is not terribly different from that of penal institutions, with the single important exception that a student is relatively free to leave the college or university.

The social structure of the school is designed to keep the student away from the important people on campus unless it is absolutely imperative that he talk to them.

For all the lip service paid to personal development in the catalogue, the actual practice in most colleges is to keep matters as impersonal as possible.

The admissions policy, the freshman orientation program, the selection of teachers, the designing of a curriculum and classroom instruction, and the social and physical organization of a typical American college or university pay little attention to the needs and problems of students and the development of the students' personalities. It is hard to escape the conclusion that so long as the students don't sully the public image of their colleges, American higher education really doesn't much care what happens to its undergraduates.

This dramatic and scathing indictment of higher education, both its content and organization, may be too bold. But there can be no denial that we have failed, for at least a segment of our people, to provide a meaningful dialogue about our aims, purposes, methods, and reasons for what we are trying to accomplish for them.

It has become a cliche that only a miniscule portion of the student's education takes place in the classroom, and yet we smugly continue to make our studies of average class size, faculty load, and space utilization. If we know that education takes place outside the classroom, why do we not begin to analyze where and how and to what extent it does take place? If we know that peer group influence determines learning and behavior, why do we ignore the pleas of student personnel workers for help in analyzing what goes on in those groups, and what the implications are for adjustments in the educational process? If we know that prevalent and popular organizational structures in higher education may impede rather than enhance the educational process, why do we engage in endless and meaningless debates concerning where the Office of Institutional Research should be located in the present administrative structure?

There must be dramatic breakthroughs, quickly, into the content and organization of higher education. The long hot summer and the winter of our discontent squarely confront the academic community. Inextricably intertwined with the demands of minority groups for a place in the sun and shelter from the snow, the demands of people for changes in the educational process can no longer be ignored.
by institutional researchers. There can be little quarrel that this is the para-
mount problem faced by institutions right now, and if our purpose is the help our
institutions solve their problems, we must pay heed.

   We must learn, and quickly, what changes we hope to accomplish in people.
   We must learn, and quickly, what kind of people can best affect those changes.
   We must learn, and quickly, the organization needed to accomplish these changes.
   I give you a challenge--a major involvement in the major problem confronting our
   institutions.

   On one occasion Dr. Herman B. Wells, one of the great university presidents,
   had this to say:

   This is a time when yesterday's bright new fact becomes today's doubt
   and tomorrow's myth. A university must do more than just stand guard
   over the nation's heritage, it must illuminate the present and help
   shape the future.

Dr. Wells could have been speaking to us as well. For if there is any mission
for institutional research, how could it better be defined than to change yester-
day's fact into today's doubt, and tomorrow's myth. I challenge you to illumi-
nate the present, but most importantly, to help shape the future.