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## Working with University Constituencies, Within and Without

### Title

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## FACULTY BREAKFAST SPEECH

President David Pierpont Gardner

Wednesday, September 25, 1974

Members of the Board of Regents and the University's Institutional Council, honored guests, members of the faculty, and key staff:

This faculty breakfast marks an anniversary. We met formally and officially for the first time just a year ago at this event. I like the timing. It enables me to review one academic year with you and look ahead to another in that spirit of renewal and anticipation that fall and the start of another term always seem to bring with them, especially in this mountain valley.

Some of you have been away and have not been able to enjoy the uniqueness of the campus in summer dress. It has been beautiful and tranquil, though alive with workshops, seminars, and professional conferences, and the Tanner Fountain in the Library Plaza has brought the canyons to our doors. We are indebted more than words can express to the vision and insistence of those who planned these lovely grounds, who plant and tend them now, and who give so generously of their means for the special places of beauty and quiet retreats to be found tucked away here and there throughout.

I hope you have had a summer both personally and professionally rewarding, wherever you have been, marching to your own drummer. If so, you will have returned this fall refreshed and resolved, like that botany instructor in James Thurber's humorous account of his college days. As a student, poor Thurber never could see through a microscope, you remember, and drove his instructor to distraction. The professor, as Thurber tells it, would "come back from vacation brown as a berry, bright-eyed, and eager to explain cell-structure

again to his classes." "We're going to see cells this time, aren't we?" he'd say to Thurber. "We'll try it with every adjustment of the microscope known to man!" You know the rest -- Thurber remained a misfit in the lab and had to take what was called a deferred pass. "His scenes with me," Thurber recalls of his teacher, "had taken a great deal out of him."

I don't know what scenes await us this coming year, or with what enthusiasm, determination, or apprehension you return. But I do know that your students and the University will be enormously influenced by the cumulative impact of your energies, curiosities, criticisms, attitudes, accomplishments, successes, and failures.

An institution both serves and is served by the people who create it and for whom it is created. If this sounds like double talk, it is no more unexplainable than the symbiotic relationship that exists in any organic relationship, like a plant in its environment. Light and dark, moments of illumination and moments of doubt and gloom, define our experiences here and affect us in measurable and sometimes enduring ways.

A university, as I suggested in my remarks to you last year, is a curious kind of sanctuary, less a retreat than a preserve where those learning can engage and simulate the larger world without all of its buffetings. A campus, of course, enjoys no immunity from the winds of change that keep things stirred up in our world, but a university can temper them to understanding and use so that the precious years our students spend here yield not so much a sense of unrelenting crisis, confusion, and uncertainty as a sense of heritage, discernment, and direction even in the midst of change.

How then may we cope with the present and engage the future as we anticipate the new year? My answer is quite conventional, and, therefore, may possibly be disappointing to some: we shall engage the future as universities have always done, by nurturing and sustaining the underlying values of academic life, what Martin Trow has called "patient inquiry, the sequential development of ideas, the emphasis on reasonable discussion and criticism, (and) the continued reference to evidence."

I do not think of education in terms of social engineering, nor should it be used by government or educators for the radical reconstruction of society. I am committed to the more modest, liberal, and realistic purposes, as Sir Toby Weaver recently described it, "of providing a framework within which an independent teaching profession can offer to all, young and old, the best possible opportunities . . . to achieve self-fulfillment by the maximum enhancement of their individual capabilities -- confident that they will themselves discern how best to make their own unique contribution to the renewal of society."

The university provides the means as well as the environment which enables its students and faculty, with new and ever-increasing options, to achieve what has always been the goal of learning: self-fulfillment and service to others, attained mostly through a sensitive but unwavering commitment to both personal freedom and self-discipline in the conduct of our own lives and in the development of our understanding.

"Knowledge is our destiny," says Jacob Bronowski. What we call the human predicament is the necessary condition of our growth. A review of Bronowski's recent book, The Ascent of Man, summarizes his argument: "The nesting policy of the grunion, a fish tied to the tides and the moon, fits it into

the world like a plug. But man, not so constructed, is not so constricted, and that very insecurity has prepared his mastery. From weakness came need, curiosity, adaptation, invention, and all the rest -- that fantastic spiral of complication we call culture." I invite you to let any doubts you may have about our profession sun themselves in that paradox.

To be at the growing tip of knowledge, we must necessarily be out on a limb. We can rejoice in the circumstances of time and place that put us out there together. Thanks to your specialized talents and the range of your interacting disciplines, learning at the University resembles nothing so much as a field of force where intellectual vectors of varying magnitude and intensity intersect.

Perhaps more than the state of knowledge, the state of the economy is on everyone's mind, making holes in everyone's pocketbook, and making my life pretty uncomfortable as University resources shrink in their effect even if harbored and preserved. But for a university, worse than an economic inflation would be an academic inflation. The dollar may be shrinking or be devalued; our degrees and diplomas must not be. Whatever our discouragements about the political or economic condition of our country, we must not water down the quality of our teaching and research or the depth of our commitment to excellence and standards in our professional lives. Modern society desperately needs intelligent leadership and competent technology. Where can the ablest students be educated if not in our better universities. Unless we demand of our students the best of which they are capable, we will be in more danger from our own incompetence than from the hydrogen bomb. The quality of our teaching, the rigor of our research, the significance of the learning experience must not be demeaned or devalued

through shoddiness on our part or indifference on the part of our students.

Mediocrity is not welcome at this University!

May I now give an accounting of my freshman year in office. I am firmly committed to the belief that the faculty, staff, and student body are entitled to know what the President regards as issues of general interest and concern to this University's long-term well-being; and what better occasion than now to report the more important of these to you. In 1973-74 we:

1. Reorganized the central administration of the University by consolidating vice presidencies and reducing their numbers in half, while fixing lines of authority and communication so as to assure full and effective input on major policy issues from all parts of the University;
2. Strengthened the University's long-range academic, fiscal, and physical planning capabilities while urging the State Board of Regents to update the State's Master Plan for Higher Education;
3. Initiated a major study to provide the University with a management information system responsive to the scale and complexity of the University's current and prospective operations;
4. Strengthened the Office of Research Administration in order to service and enhance the University's growing research capability;
5. Established cooperative arrangements with sister institutions within the State, both public and private, in an effort to improve communications and understanding and to develop interinstitutional programs of mutual benefit;
6. Concluded agreements with the Regents on basic principles and

practices affecting academic freedom and tenure at this University, consistent with the University Senate's Code of Faculty Responsibility;

7. Checked a six-year decline in the University's share of appropriations for higher education and secured an increase from 14 percent to 25 percent of the University's earned overhead on research which can be retained to further enhance the University's research capabilities;
8. Reached out into the communities of the State with a variety of public service, continuing education, and theatre arts productions and programs complemented by a major and more personal effort to link up the University with its supporting constituent groups and to resecure the confidence and support of the people of Utah in their major University;
9. Worked to improve higher education's budgeting policies and procedures, to develop a rational base for the levels of tuition charged at the system's several colleges and universities, and to create a common basis for planning and funding the system's capital needs; and
10. Planned for the fiscal, academic, and physical plant problems we will be facing during a time of steady-state enrollments.

In short, during the past year, I have been like a man who has just acquired a house and first sizes up the neighborhood; during the current year, I intend to inspect the house itself more closely and come to know it room by room, closet by closet, skeleton by skeleton. I have tried first of all to see the University in its largest contexts (1) in relation to the State it serves, (2) in relation to its sister institutions under our system of governance, and (3) in relation to our assigned

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tasks and inherent objectives as we try to honor our mission of providing an education that is both liberal and professional, both general and specific, both traditional and up-to-date.

During the coming year, I shall attempt to consolidate gains made this past year while turning more of my attention than the last several months allowed to academic and administrative affairs on campus. I shall be asking questions which I believe are important and will be seeking answers:

1. What can be done to strengthen the holdings and usefulness of the University's Libraries?
2. What can be done to improve the quality of our undergraduate instruction, especially for our freshman and sophomore students?
3. What can be done to further strengthen the Honors Program?
4. What can we do to encourage innovative programs, both on and off campus, such as last year's seminars in the College of Humanities in which faculty from the several departments collaborated and combined traditional study on campus with meaningful work in the field and independent study?
5. What can be done to broaden our students' understanding of the world in which they live, especially other cultures and civilizations, through exchange programs and contractual arrangements with distinguished foreign universities?
6. What can we do to implement the University Professorship program so that eminent men and women on our faculty can have a kind of roving commission on campus, making their presence felt, not only in their discipline, but in the University at large?



7. What can be done to assure our students of a liberal education, whatever the specialization, and how can we avoid a paralysis of effort in this vital area of University work without rupturing relationships among persons whose honest differences have tended to prolong rather than to conclude a workable solution?
8. What can we do to assure an honest and effective affirmative action program that respects both our sense of standards and justice and that enriches rather than diminishes the pluralism of our community?
9. What can we do to strengthen the academic programs needful of support without weakening those already strong? and,
10. What can we do to maintain and assure the continuance of the high morale, optimism and sense of future about our University that presently makes this an exciting place to be?

It is time to close. Many of you go from here to departmental meetings, where the real work of the University will be done. I would like to think that some part of each day during the year ahead of us may be cause for celebration, some redeeming moment in our research, our teaching, or the service we render our campus or in the community.

As I said last year, it is an exhilarating thought that knowledge is our business. There is nothing terminal about it. In learning itself, there is no zero growth. May we be as open-minded as our calling is open-ended and enter upon this year with a zest, with a pride in our profession, and humility in our luck that we should be part of it. The University of Utah is one of the State's most precious treasures. I regard it as a privilege to be in her service.