WORKING TOGETHER: AN AGENDA FOR JOINT ACTION

Western College Association

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When I opened the program for this meeting a few weeks ago and saw the title of the opening address--"Working Together: An Agenda for Joint Action by Independent and Public Institutions for the Good of Higher Education in the Region"--I was impressed by the boldness of the speaker in choosing such a large topic. Then I realized, not without some dismay, that it was the title of my address. What I have in mind is actually somewhat less ambitious. That is to share with you a few thoughts on why cooperation between independent and public colleges and universities matters, and then to call out a few areas in which, I believe, we can and should work together.

One of the glories of American higher education is its diversity. This country is unique in the world in the abundant variety of the opportunities we offer our young people for higher education. Our system favors decentralization and competition as something that is as good for colleges as it is for companies. Competition for students, for faculty, and yes, for presidents and chancellors, has been indispensable in creating one of the most successful systems of higher

education anywhere. It is an idea that has served the United States well over the course of its history, and will undoubtedly continue to do so.

But competition has never summed up the relationship between independent and public higher education--at least here in the Western part of the United States. For some reason, relations between public and independent institutions on the East Coast have been mostly competitive. Unlike our Eastern colleagues, however, we in the West have historically managed to be friends as well as rivals.

In recent years some have criticized us as being less attentive to our relationships than we should be, but I believe such criticism, however well-intended, has been basically mistaken. There are many areas in which public and independent institutions cooperate. For example:

> The California Education Round Table is the only forum that regularly brings together the heads of each of the educational segments to discuss state policy issues relating to education. The Round Table has, in turn, created the Intersegmental Coordinating Council, which fosters close collaboration on intersegmental programs.

The University of California and the Community Colleges have designed a number of creative programs to improve student transfer. Working especially through faculty-to-faculty collaboration on curriculum, and improved ways to advise students, these transfer agreement programs have raised dramatically the number of transfer applications to the University.

The University of California's Berkeley campus library has a longstanding relationship with Stanford University's library, a relationship that includes reciprocal borrowing privileges, agreements to coordinate development of certain specialized collections, and the operation of a shuttle service between the two institutions. The UCLA library has for many years maintained similar cooperative relationships with the libraries at the University of Southern California, the California Institute of Technology, and the Getty Museum.

The UC libraries have also established a variety of cooperative agreements with the California State University over the years, including special arrangements for fast retrieval of materials at Berkeley and Los Angeles requested by CSU faculty. And besides these institutional arrangements, UC's libraries provide support to

other California libraries in less formal ways. In the wake of the October 17th earthquake, the Berkeley library opened its doors to students from Stanford, San Francisco State University, and St. Mary's College of Moraga until the damaged libraries at these institutions could be reopened.

The California Council on Science and Technology, established just last year, provides advice to the Governor, the Legislature, and others on urgent technical, social, and economic problems with technological and scientific dimensions. It is a collaborative effort by the University of California, the California Institute of Technology, Stanford University, the University of Southern California, and the California State University system.

And one of the most exciting collaborative endeavors is the Keck Telescope, a joint project of the University of California and the California Institute of Technology, with the assistance of the University of Hawaii. Caltech is funding construction of the telescope and observatory, chiefly from a Keck Foundation gift of $70 million; UC is helping with the costs of the initial complement of major instruments and the first 25 years of operation; and the University of Hawaii has provided the site. Located atop Mauna

Kea, the telescope will help make possible a new era in astronomical discovery and our knowledge of the universe.

These examples are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive; to inventory the whole range of relationships among and between the community colleges, the California State University, the University of California, and the independent institutions would require several pages.

But what of the future? In my opinion, we will need to step up our efforts to work together. I would like to discuss two such areas. The first concerns higher education's relationship with the schools and the quality of schooling; and the second deals with growth in higher education itself.

First of all, we need to continue our efforts to help improve the quality of the public schools. In a recent survey of foreign executives who are employed by multinational companies and who live in the United States, two questions were asked: What is the greatest asset enjoyed by the United States, and what is its greatest liability? The greatest asset, most of them agreed, was the American university; the greatest liability was, in their view, the American public school.

That is a sobering thought: the nation's greatest asset sitting atop its greatest liability.

We can, of course, point to significant and encouraging improvements in our schools as a result of the reform movement launched in the early 1980s with the publication of A Nation at Risk and other reports that riveted public attention on the condition of America's public schools. But we have a long way still to go.

It should be of particular concern to us that the secondary school dropout rate for Black, Latino, and Chicano students is unacceptably high. That is a concern not only for the present but especially for the future, as those are also the students who have historically performed at the lower levels of achievement and who are the fastest-growing (and in California, the largest) segment of the K-12 populace.

Much, of course, is being done. At the University of California, for example, our University-School Education Improvement unit is deeply involved in working with other segments to improve the preparation of teachers, strengthen the school curriculum, and set specific performance goals for student learning. USEI, as it is called, works with other state institutions and agencies to create new initiatives, programs for educational leadership, and statewide conferences on such topics as minority faculty recruitment and multicultural teacher preparation.

The California Writing Project, one of the most respected university-based school improvement efforts in the nation, offers professional development to K-12 writing teachers and has been so successful that it has been the model for similar projects in mathematics and science; plans are underway to create additional projects in all of the areas required for high school graduation. Each project is guided by an intersegmental advisory committee which decides on goals and priorities. And each has programs located on UC and CSU campuses; the Mathematics Project has a program on a community college campus.

The California Curriculum Consultant Project, another intersegmental initiative, provides consultants from postsecondary and secondary campuses to help high school departments to analyze and improve their curricula.

The University of California's Lawrence Hall of Science sponsors a remarkable array of math and science education programs, among them teacher education programs, instructional programs for children and adults, workshops for schools and the community, and curriculum research and development. LHS is, in fact, one of the most powerful forces for change in the way math and science are taught in our schools.

The MESA program--the name stands for Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement--works with underrepresented minority students to encourage them to think about, and prepare for, careers in those three areas. MESA serves junior high, high school, and university students and their parents by providing career advising, summer programs, admissions assistance, tutoring, and a host of other services as well.

These and other efforts will move us along in school reform. But we have many remaining opportunities to capitalize on the progress that has been made, and the need to continue working together is urgent and compelling.

A second challenge will be to find places for the surge of students we are expecting in the next 15 years or so. The University of California estimates that we will need to plan for 63,000 additional students or so by the year 2005. And that projection is a conservative one. It is based on the assumption that California's independent colleges and universities will at least hold steady, and even modestly increase, in the proportion of California high school graduates they enroll, and that the community colleges and the California State University will be growing as well, consistent with the provisions of the California Master Plan for Higher Education.

UC's planning assumes that the maximum Cal Grant award will cover 70 percent of the average tuition at independent colleges and universities, rather than the current 47 percent of average tuition in the independent sector. Thus, UC is vigorously supporting increases in Cal Grant awards not only in consideration of the interests of the independent institutions, but also to assure students maximum freedom of choice and to avoid the prospect of overwhelming numbers of students coming into the public sector.

All of our planning, of course, also assumes that the state of California will be in a position to fund improvements in K-12 and growth in our colleges and universities, including increases in the Cal Grant program. At present, a dark cloud hangs over that prospect, one that can only be cleared away in the foreseeable future if the people of California vote to enact Proposition 111 on the June ballot. I wish, therefore, to offer some closing comments about the significance of that proposition for everything else we will be discussing about the context and future of higher education, public and independent, in California.

Here is the problem: California's budget is presently driven by constitutional and statutory provisions that, for all practical purposes, deal the Legislature and the Governor out of the game. A series of propositions over the years is chiefly responsible--Proposition 13 in 1978, which shifted substantial funding for public

services from local government to the State; Proposition 4 in 1979, the so-called Gann Spending Limit, which capped state spending according to a formula driven by population increases and the national Consumer Price Index; and Proposition 98 in 1988, which locks up a growing percentage of the State budget for K-12 and the community colleges.

What is left, after subtracting a whole range of statutes enacted by the Legislature for the purpose of protecting various health and welfare programs, is about eight to ten percent of the State budget, depending on how you calculate it. That is the portion of the budget over which the Governor and the Legislature can exercise some discretion without regard for constitutional or statutory limitations. The University of California and the California State University are among the agencies competing for that fraction. I should also mention that the Cal Grant Program is included in this small slice of the budget as well.

There is no light at the end of this tunnel!. Proposition 98 allows funding for K-14 to grow annually, indefinitely. Other programs with funding guarantees get their share. The cap on State spending continues. The unprotected programs, such as UC and CSU, will be fundamentally and irretrievably harmed, unless they take steps to tailor the size of their institutions and the nature and character of their offerings to available resources. In UC's case, this would

require the taking of some very unwelcome actions, e.g., enrolling fewer students than presently projected, probably by modifying UC's standards for admission at all levels; shrinking the range and number of UC's academic programs; reducing its administrative and public service capacity; increasing student fees; and reconsidering our historic tuition-free policy for California residents. The alternative would be to accommodate a slow but inevitable slippage in the quality of the University of California, an unacceptable alternative in my view.

Well, what can we do about it? Proposition 111 on the June ballot is being presented to the voters as a gas tax increase to relieve congestion on the State's roads and freeways, to rebuild the State's transportation infrastructure, and to modernize its system of highways. When you walk into the voting booth, that is what you will think you are voting on, and indeed you are. But it will not just affect California's transportation needs. It will, among other things, redefine the way in which the State limit on spending is to be calculated, using personal income as the point of departure for calculating annual adjustments--a more authentic measure of the State's capacity to pay. It will also modify the terms and conditions of Proposition 98, while still protecting the funding floor K-14 currently has. And the effect of these two provisions will be to loosen up State spending to allow government flexibility in distributing the revenues.

It is gratifying in light of these circumstances to note that the higher education community in California is working together to help inform the public about the significance of Proposition 111--including the community colleges, who in spite of being protected by Proposition 98 are nevertheless working closely with the rest of higher education to encourage the voters to look favorably on the enactment of Proposition 111. Its passage is crucial to the future of all of higher education in California.

Having just discussed support from the public sector, I would like to make a final comment about support from the private sector. And in this respect we should all be quite encouraged by our recent experience and prospects. The level of private support that both the public and independent sectors have received in recent years from the public, alumni, foundations, and friends is nothing short of remarkable. While UC is assisted by the State--currently 35 percent of our total budget comes from Sacramento--we have from our earliest days relied on the support of alumni and friends to help make the difference between adequate and excellent. We have tried to pursue our fund-raising efforts, however, in ways that are sensitive to the historical collaborative efforts of the public and independent sectors in California. I am not unaware of the apprehensions some of our colleagues in the independent sector have about this matter. But the evidence suggests that private generosity is reaching record

levels not just in the public sector but in the independent sector as well, and that is good news for all of us.

Those of us who have been associated with higher education in California have been part of a great experiment, an ongoing experiment in which we have attempted to wed, as if they were inseparable, access to higher education for those who have prepared themselves for university and college-level work with high-quality education for all who enroll. As a matter of State policy, California seeks both access and excellence; the Master Plan for Higher Education has been driven by those two objectives. In that sense, California is exceptional. What one finds in most of the world and in most of the United States is a commitment to one but not necessarily to the other. If Proposition 111 is enacted, if we continue to merit the support of the people of California and of our friends and alumni, and if we can discover new and innovative ways of working with one another to accomplish together what we cannot do alone, then the future of California higher education--public and independent--should be very bright indeed.