

Clark plans innovations, new solutions

Editor's Note: The following is an edited text of University President Robert Clark's address to the faculty meeting held Wednesday. Due to space limitations, the full speech is not reprinted. Approximately 60 per cent of the prepared text is included below, with no intent to change the original meaning.

It may be useful to all of us if I comment on the governing structure of the University and on some of the problems to which we must attend in the coming year.

I. Governance. Steeped in the traditions of the University and practiced in its ways, I know that the charter defines the president as a member of the faculty and assigns to the faculty responsibility for the curriculum and academic requirements, for student conduct and welfare—with final authority reserved to the regents, now the Board of Higher Education. The system is well calculated to temper the exuberance of a president by the deliberations of a judicious faculty.

In the most marked change in recent years, and in response to an urgency that would not be denied, you have enlarged the governing circle to include students. I concur with your judgment, heartily. Faculties, noting the apathy of the mass or wary of the prospective irresponsibility of the few, are reluctant to give students control. I share this uneasiness, not so much from fear of what the students will do, or from sensitiveness to public reaction, as from concern that we will take half-way measures, that we will not invent the way to involve students where their judgment counts or to make them truly responsible to their peers. The solution to this thorny problem, I believe, is to extend, not retrench,

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their involvement, so that they will engage not only in general University affairs but in the functions of their own schools, colleges and departments—without the faculty's relinquishing its final, professional responsibility. Let us encourage the students to make their government more representative and more responsible to student views, and let us enlarge student control of their own budgets, with the condition that they either sustain present programs for which long-time or necessary commitments have been made, find other funds to sustain them, or if radical change is clearly mandated by the students, find an orderly way to make it.

We may be on the point of losing something extraordinarily precious in the life of this University—governance by a concerned faculty. It may be possible to delegate more responsibility to the Academic Senate, to preserve limited categories of issues for the general faculty, to utilize the referendum, to schedule faculty meetings less frequently without abandoning the right to hold them every month.

Bigness and complexity have likewise made it more difficult for the University to maintain responsible and sensitive administration.

To achieve the delicate balance between personal involvement and delegation of authority, it will be necessary 1) to encourage a free flow of information so that prospective decisions will be influenced by those persons most intimately affected and so that decisions already taken may be subjected to scrutiny and review, 2) to delegate responsibility without severing communication with the President's Office, 3) to provide a mechanism or procedures for the review and possible reversal of a decision.

To effect these goals I propose to introduce some innovations in administrative organization and to utilize most of the traditional agencies.

First, I intend to reconstitute the President's Staff. One of my principal objectives in doing so will be to increase administrative attention and focus on the University's primary mission—its academic programs. The primary body for achieving this objective will be the Council of Deans in which the Dean of Faculties and I shall both be involved. I shall invite the several deans to come to my office, to discuss their problems and aspirations, but their business will be conducted with the Dean of Faculties, who will take action or make recommendations to me. I hope to meet with department heads and facul-

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ties for the purpose of communication, the business to be transacted in the appropriate office. But I should add, that communication is not to inform only, but to provide the basis for action.

For the auxiliary functions of the University—the housing program, the health service, student affairs and others; and to coordinate and implement policies that impinge upon more than one area of the University, I shall meet regularly with an Administrative Committee including the Dean of Faculties, the Dean of Administration, and others.

I shall continue regular meetings with the Advisory Council. I shall continue meeting regularly with the Budget Committee and I shall rely upon the Committee on Committees. I am hopeful that the role of the Academic Senate can be enlarged, not only in the matters to which I have alluded, but in functions of studying and proposing or acting upon policy change. I shall, at its request, meet with the ASUO Cabinet twice a month, and hopefully at times yet to be determined with a committee representing minority students, in both instances for communication, with policies and specific proposals for action to be developed through the agents of the administration.

Lest you may not have perceived my intent, let me state that it is to share responsibility, and yet not let go of the vital functions of the University.

I hope that this administrative pattern will be effective

for all of us. We shall have occasion to test it forthwith. For the problems facing us are many and urgent.

One of them is to define our purpose as a University. Periodically every University must re-examine and re-define its mission. In general terms one scarcely need do more than restate Ortega. Roughly his propositions are two: first, the function of the University is to transmit culture, to teach the professions, and to advance knowledge (through research); and second, the organization of the University should be based upon the student and not upon the professor or upon knowledge.

I shall return to the second of these propositions later. On the first, it may not be difficult, with careful exposition of the meaning, to get faculty, students, and the legislature to agree on Ortega's statement of functions. The problem arises in the distribution of limited resources, and creative energy among the three.

Our University was unprepared for the recent state legislative action. It had assumed that its growth and development were generally in accord with the prescription and assumptions of the Legislature and the Board. Let me name several.

1) Areas of instruction and research in the liberal arts and sciences, and specified professional fields, were prescribed by the Board and adhered to by the University.

2) It was generally assumed, as in most public universities, that growth in each of the several instructional departments would be determined in a large measure by student demand. Heretofore, the public has not been hospitable to the imposition of arbitrary limits on enrollment, save in exceptional cases, as, for example, the lack of laboratory space in one of the sciences. The areas assigned to the University, particularly the arts and sciences, education and business, are those which experience the greatest demands for advanced graduate study. The very nature of this University, therefore, encourages a larger percentage of graduate students than might be expected in applied fields.

3) Our increasingly sophisticated society demands an increasing number of highly prepared men and women. It is doubtful that the University of Oregon, in its graduate program, has kept pace either with the needs of society, or with comparable public universities in other states.

4) It has been assumed that the State of Oregon should



maintain a rough balance between non-resident students and Oregon residents who seek higher education in other states. The data suggest that in the State System as a whole we have maintained that balance. But the curricula assigned to the University are those which seem to attract the more mobile students, and the University, having a disproportionate share of non-residents, is the institution most seriously affected by the new regulation. University education ought not to be limited by state boundaries. It is a part of a national, indeed of an international whole.

But when all of this is said, the mission of the University must be defined not on educational terms alone, but also on the basis of available resources.

We must, then, define our purpose. Department by department, we must examine the assumptions on which we operate. Our criterion ought not be how many students we can recruit, but, given our resources, what kind of education can we offer them when they enroll. We must review and justify the allocation of faculty to undergraduate and graduate functions, we must restudy and adjust teaching loads, both to improve undergraduate instruction and to protect the research function essential to graduate studies.

B. Curriculum and Instruction. We shall be well advised to experiment freely with instructional methods and to foster innovative approaches to the curriculum and to course content. I offer these comments and suggestions.

1. The University is large enough and sufficiently diverse to experiment without destroying that which is good. The present pattern of group requirements, with improvement in course content, may well be the most satisfactory approach to general education for the majority of our students. The groups are an attempt to give balance the professionalism that engages the attention of most students. Without neglecting the sciences, they are skewed toward the humanities, an emphasis appropriate

to our prescribed mission. And yet I suspect that far too many of them are professionally oriented or that, ignoring Ortega's injunction, they are based upon the abstract requirements of the subject matter, and not upon the concrete needs of the student.

2. We ought to consider whether or not it is feasible to provide a small seminar, every year or every term for every undergraduate student.

3. Professors should experiment with new, and even radically different, methods of instruction.

4. The most important innovation that we can undertake, in my judgment, is the development of several small, relatively autonomous groups of students and professors who, within their academic communities, may depart in radical ways from the traditional curriculum. It is possible that one or more of these groups might develop a satellite or residential college.

5. We should consider the feasibility of giving selected students—largely self-selected—the discretion of determining, within broadly defined areas, the content of their own education and the means of acquiring it, through attendance at lectures or independent study.

6. We should recognize that it is the function of the University not only to conserve and transmit but to act as an agent of change—so long as the University is faithful to its own character. I believe that it is a violation of the University's integrity to yield to the student's demand that he be given credit for community work, however noble that work may be, or to his demand that the University as University engage directly in social or political conflict. But it is proper for the University to teach its students the processes of social change, to study their efforts to apply what they have learned, and

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to give them credit for their attempt to conceptualize what they have experienced. Thus, in history, literature, and the social sciences, and even the sciences, we can make the curriculum relevant, make the subject matter, without our compromising its integrity, serve the needs of the student.

Equally urgent, and likewise of concern to all of us is the need for the University, as an agent of the general society, to meet the special needs of students from minority groups. In our technological society the labor of the unskilled is an embarrassment. The only way up, the only way open to an integration into the larger society, is through the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Society must take positive and highly creative steps to accelerate the acquisition of skills and knowledge, and the University must do its part. Business has undertaken a massive effort, through the National Alliance of Businessmen (NAB) and the Urban Coalition. The program has worked remarkably well, though the prospective decline in employment opportunities is a foreboding note. The operating principles are, with modification, applicable to higher education. If we are to accelerate the education of minority students, as I believe we should, we must continue to enlarge the program of special admissions (without, however, recruiting young people to the certain and bitter experience of failure); we must improve our assistance programs, both instructional and financial; we must provide time for these disadvantaged students to establish themselves without their being forever freighted down with sub-standard GPA's; we must reach out not so much to help them as to give them the chance to help themselves. But once we have made these concessions to their need, we must expect them to hold their own, to make their way on the basis of ability and performance.

Finally, I should like to speak to the problem of student unrest and disruption. We can do much to reduce conflict if we move vigorously on the issues I have already discussed. Two of the great assets of the University in meeting the current crisis are 1) the long-standing and proud tradition of a campus open to the free discussion of opposing and divergent ideas; the University faculty's sense of responsibility, assigned by the charter, for student conduct and welfare.

In the immediate crisis, two distinctions must be made clear, both for ourselves and for the better understanding of the public: 1) argument, demonstration, protest, even

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bad manners, ought not to be confused with disruptive and coercive behavior.

2) Oftentimes student demands are made not so much to effect change on the campus as to dramatize an issue of more general concern. There is small reason, therefore, for the administrator to feel frustrated or angry when students demand changes that he cannot effect. The problem, however, is that students themselves, or many of them, do not always perceive the distinction—with the result that the president's failure to yield to an unreasonable demand generates frustration and anger that can be inflamed into violence.

Added to these is the fact that some students are so persuaded of the moral rightness of their cause that they are intolerant of all other views. It is now a widely enunciated dogma that there are limits to tolerance, that only those who judge themselves to be right are qualified to speak or act for the people, that the right to speak or to act—or to offer or to take certain curricula—must be withdrawn from the majority or from certain segments of the society or the University. "Liberating tolerance," and I quote from a prophet of the Left, "Liberating tolerance would mean intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left ..."

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