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University President William Boyd's methods as an administrator during the past seven months have irked students and faculty. His past administrative positions are analyzed in...

A look at the president

Editor's note: William Boyd was University of Oregon president for only six weeks when he found himself in the middle of heated controversy. Now, seven months later, his policies still draw student attacks. Why has he sparked such continued and prolonged criticism? The writers have spent the last four weeks examining Boyd as an administrator and as an individual. They talked to people in Michigan, where Boyd was also a university president, and traveled to Berkeley to research Boyd's years as an administrator there. Today's story traces Boyd's history as an administrator. Wednesday's story will examine Boyd's personality.

"I don't have much of a record here at all. I would hope that after I'd been here a long enough time to have compiled a record, that I would be well regarded... But when students at the campus already picture me as a racist and a bigot—you know, a guy's got to run awfully fast to catch up."

Most people at the University, including the president himself, agree that William Boyd has some catching up to do before he can start compiling a very successful record here. People differ in their perceptions of how far and how fast the man should have to run, though. Many faculty and administrators see the last seven heated months of Boyd's career as his "adjustment" period, while students are less patient and less kind in their assessment of the actions of the new University president.

Seven months ago, when Boyd first took office, he told the University community that he would "start off just by listening. Those who are looking for any dramatic changes will be disappointed." He predicted that any differences in the University's operation would be "stylistic."

In those last seven months, Boyd has been anything but discreet. He's been listening all right; but he's been hearing some harsh words from demanding students, outraged minorities and disgruntled faculty. Boyd's quick actions and unpopular decisions have thrown him into the middle of more controversy than this University has seen in a long time.

The man who said seven months ago that he hoped to be "close to students" at this University has been criticized for trampling on student rights, for ignoring student opinions and for keeping students out of the decision-making process. Students claim he is uncompromising and has a hard personality to deal with.

But when Boyd came to this University, he had every reason to believe he would be close to students. As Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs at the University of California (UC) in Berkeley from 1966 through 1968, and for the following seven years as president of Central Michigan University (CMU), Boyd was popular and praised for his constructive interaction with students. The adverse picture student leaders at this University paint of Boyd is incongruous with his past record as an administrator and a "champion" of student rights.

The inconsistency is perplexing and frustrating. Why is a man who was previously well accepted meeting with such opposition at this University?

Perhaps, as Boyd believes, the first few months of his administration were made to look bad because of "circumstances" — a rash of student requests he felt he had to deny.

"It's partly just stylistic, and partly the circumstance of the personalities that are interacting here so far and the particular set of issues that happened to come up," Boyd says. "I think that circumstance has brought up a lot of questions in a row that elicited a 'no' answer."

The ASUO feels Boyd's "no" answers are denying students a place in the decision-making process of the University. Minorities and faculty feel his reorganization of the minority program is undermining their right to a fair and decent education. But along with dissatisfaction over Boyd's final actions, people resent his decision-making methods.

One of the main complaints which ASUO leaders have raised against Boyd is that he does not listen sincerely to their requests and advice and is therefore unwilling to compromise or offer alternatives.

ASUO Pres. Jim Bernau has probably spent more time with Boyd than any other student at the University. But most of that time is spent in argument, and few constructive results have come out of the interaction.

"We want a commitment from him to help us find solutions to the problems we're facing," says Bernau. "Why should a special burden be placed on the students? By the nature of his job he has an obligation to provide administrative remedies for the University's shortcomings."

Bernau's major complaint has been that while Boyd denies student requests, he offers no alternatives or suggestions to help the ASUO achieve its goals.

But the charge that Boyd is oblivious to the student voice and is unwilling to compromise and work

out solutions to student problems finds little basis in his past administrative roles.

At Berkeley, Boyd spent much of his time working directly with students, trying to forge some kind of communication between the Berkeley administration and a hostile student body.

The Associated Press called Boyd "the man whose job it is to keep the peace between the University of California administration and the student activists at Berkeley." Boyd felt his position "was the most exciting job in the United States at the time. I think I was the luckiest guy alive."

In his role as a mediator, Boyd did not advance his own policies, but acted under the guidelines of Chancellor Roger Heyns. Much of his time was spent defending and clarifying these policies.

"I was a very active participant in the debates that were going on at the Berkeley campus," says Boyd. "I was someone who at least tried to explain what the administration's position was — someone who could interpret the University for both students and the community. I was a troubleshooter working where the action was."

In "keeping the peace," Boyd met frequently with student leaders and spoke often to the hundreds of students who assembled for rallies in Sproul Plaza, the site of Berkeley's free speech platform.

People at Berkeley felt that Boyd respected students as individuals and usually expressed sympathy with their demands. Some especially remembered him for the amount of time he spent working toward a compromise with students.

Pat Quinn, Boyd's secretary while he was at Berkeley, remembers his frequent meetings with students.

"He was always accessible to students. I don't think I've every kept such a busy calendar for an administrator. I think he took his responsibility toward students very seriously."

The dean of students under Boyd, Arleigh Williams, praises him for his willingness to compromise and his objectivity.

"I cannot conceive of him doing anything unilaterally without considering many other opinions. He was always able to accept an argument that was better than his own."

Students remember that Boyd worked well with them and that he didn't face much opposition and had few enemies.

"Sure, he had his problems at Berkeley, but then every administrator did at that time," says Buzz Barber, a 1968 graduate who is now a San Francisco lawyer. "I just don't remember anybody disliking him personally. Barber also says Boyd was not particularly controversial as an administrator."

But Doug Turner, chair of the 1967 student senate and an activist in UC politics and demonstrations, remembers an issue which threw Boyd into the middle of heated controversy with students. Turner feels Boyd's major problem in dealing with students was that he sometimes underestimated their goals and their determination.

The Berkeley administration at that time began moves to take over control of ASUC finances. Charging the student government with irresponsible allocation of student fees, the UC administration decided to take away that power. Boyd was the administrative heavy assigned to carry out the job.

Boyd thought the administration

could rapidly assert its power and was frustrated when students refused to watch what little power they had slip away, Turner says.

"His job was to execute the expropriation, and he expected to do it with a minimum of controversy. But he ran into a lot of protest that two years later ended in the administration finally giving the money back."

Boyd had left Berkeley before the issue was finally settled.

The ASUO has also complained about Boyd's underestimation of students' political maturity. Bernau claims the communication problem is caused by Boyd's refusal to take students seriously.

Students at CMU admit their student body is not as concerned with the kinds of political and moral issues that attract Berkeley and Eugene students.

Boyd had been at CMU two years before Vietnam protests reached their peak at Michigan.

Boyd says his job at Berkeley made the conservative community of Mt. Pleasant, Mich., wary of him and apprehensive of how he would handle the Vietnam demonstrations.

"Because I was familiar with the protests, I wasn't threatened by them," says Boyd. "It was the outside community that felt threatened. And consequently at Michigan, just by circumstance, students viewed me as their champion against a hostile outside world."

The students' high opinion of Boyd lasted until the day he left. Boyd helped students form an association (ASCMU), where they had previously had no power at the university.

"There were a lot of hassles, and Boyd just helped us work them out," says Chuck Korn, 1974-75 CMU student body treasurer. "He always tried to see both sides of an issue and to do what was fair. He was very pro-student and a very likeable man. If you've met him, you know that."

But Korn admits Boyd was somewhat cautious about student involvement. "He always said he was for maximum student involvement. But student involvement means different things to different people." Korn feels Boyd sometimes had a different perception of it than students did.

But 1974-75 ASCMU Pres. Bill Pilchek feels Boyd "actively sought student participation. Boyd accepted and solicited student involvement more than any other administrator I've worked with."

Pilchek did say whenever Boyd was not in favor of a student proposal before CMU's Faculty Senate, he could usually persuade the faculty to vote against it.

Boyd was criticized for doing the same thing at this University when he so strongly opposed the student proposal for a McArthur Court governing board before the General Faculty. His objections, coupled with University attorney Dave Frohnmayer's legal quarrels over the wording of the proposal, effectively stifled any discussion of the motion. Many students felt Boyd overpowered the faculty with his position as president when he relinquished the chair to speak against the proposal.

A factor of Boyd's administration which is often as influential as his policies and politics is that the president rarely hides his emotions.

Unlike many administrators, Boyd does not attempt to throw up an administrative shield to guard his personal feelings from the attacks endured in his job.

But the apparent benefits of an open personality may be

counter-balanced by drawbacks.

Turner remembers students respected Boyd for his personal approach to problems, but this personal touch caused some difficulties.

"All the pressures put him into a corner. I could understand his predicament," Turner, who was meeting with Boyd "a couple of times a week," says Boyd was "open to the students' position, and he was never very happy about what he had to do. He was really just the wrong guy in the wrong job at the wrong time."

Turner says what impressed him most about Boyd was his "human characteristics." He said students felt they could relate to Boyd, especially since he let his emotions become a part of his dealings.

"I always thought he was a pretty nice guy. He would lose his temper, and he tended to take our criticism of the administration too personally." But, Turner says, his emotions made Boyd much easier to work with than other administrators. "If I had my druthers, I'd rather be dealing with Bill Boyd."

Robert Cole, a liberal Berkeley law professor and faculty consultant to the 1966 UC administration, also remembers Boyd's emotions caused him some problems.

"Unlike most administrators, he was willing to put his heart on his sleeve," Cole says. "He was always thought of the students as individuals. But when he had to be tough, his reaction was to get very tough because he could not remain detached. This made him vulnerable."

Boyd's straightforward politics often cause as much friction as his candid personality.

He does not worry about the timing of his decisions or the effect his statements might have upon opponents.

In fact it is the bluntness of Boyd's decisions which may be responsible for his early opposition here.

"It's not local style to be as candid as I got used to being," Boyd says. "It was very much the Berkeley style for people to say exactly what they were thinking. Berkeley prided itself on the fact that people didn't mind being abrasive with one another. There was almost a zeal for it. And I picked up some habits that I'll probably have to give up."

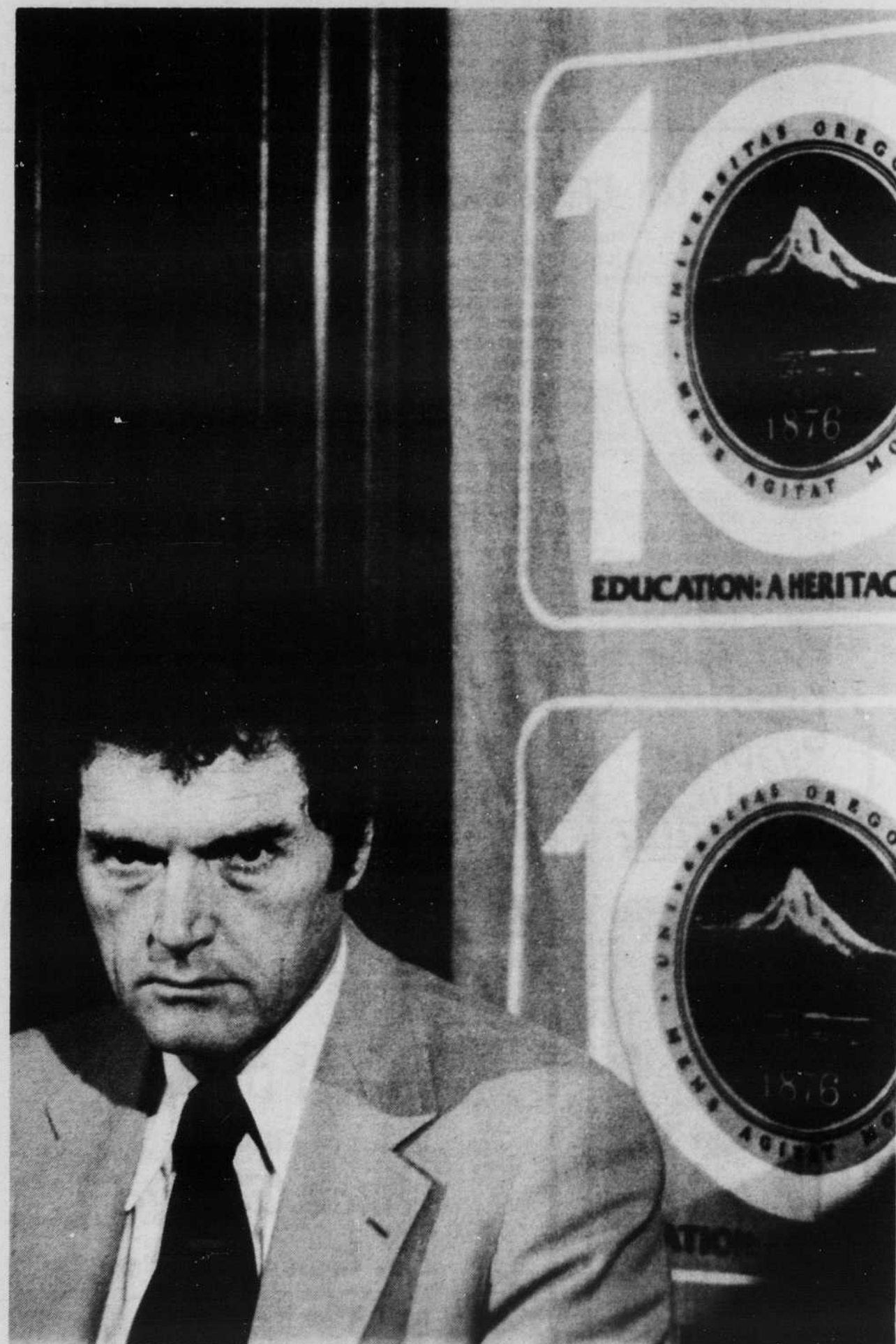
To adjust to what he believes is a more sensitive atmosphere, Boyd is planning to take the bite out of his politics.

"I think so much of the problem is stylistic," he says. "I'm trying to change my style, to be less abrasive."

"I've been trying to be sweeter, I really have. Have you noticed? I've quit making irreverent comments."

Different personalities, different circumstances and different individual styles help explain why Boyd has sparked the controversy of the last seven months. Of course, his reception at this university is bound to be somewhat different than that which he has encountered before, since the people and the issues are not the same.

Hopefully, the president's rocky beginning is just the University's painful adjustments to a new president with new ways. The fact is Boyd has been well accepted in his previous administrative roles. He has a deep commitment to the University and to its future. Unless antagonists can work to compromise demands in open discussion, the opposition that Boyd has faced this year could foreshadow a rough future of conflict.



By Patty Farrell and Chris Jupp

Photos by Greg Clark

Of the Emerald