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The University and Service
to the Community

Institute of Urban & Regional Development
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The University and Service to the Community

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I

■ □ ■ THE BURDEN OF THIS paper is the university's responsibility to offer service to the community at large. At the moment, we are in the midst of unprecedented strife centering around community demands—demands by minorities for programs they believe are essential and which they insist must be organized in specific ways to insure meaningful, relevant content.

I suggest that the present strife is but a symptom of the underlying social conflict, and that its solution requires a rigorous analysis of the relationship between a university and the community or larger society. Our University cannot ignore the present strike nor the immediate demands of the strikers. But even though it were to set up a Third World college today, the University cannot afford to limit its response to the immediate crisis and ignore the larger context from which it stems. I believe that, rather than just inaugurating additional specialized programs in new areas (e.g., black studies programs), we will have to create a new kind of institution which can deal with the real issues of our time and can deal with the totality of needs. I shall later describe the kind of institution—a "college in dispersion"—which I am proposing. But first, let us consider the nature of the university's past relationship to the community and the nature of the community's needs today.

A university grows out of the needs, desires, and expectations of the community by which and in which it is established. Since its inception, the modern university has reflected the expectations and

desires of the broader society even though it is often accused of existing outside the "real" world and of having little concern with practical issues, and even though it is often considered—by itself as well as by the external community—to be an isolated institution, resembling a monastery more than a responsive community agency. Nevertheless, society has always importuned the university for resources to deal with its day-by-day needs, and the university has tried to meet these demands. It was the university's response to increased demands for higher education, for research and development, and for training personnel in specialized and technical fields (from armament and foreign policy to accounting and business) that led to the complex "multiversity" and the vast array of activities that now make up university life.

At the same time, like any other institution, a university does have a life of its own and, in order to survive, any institution must maintain a balance between preserving its own cohesive, coherent life and responding to external demands.

Universities today share with almost all other social institutions a crisis which demands that their traditional patterns of operation be modified in order to meet new social expectations. Vast changes in value systems are currently exploding throughout society. As the conservative *Fortune* magazine recently reminded its readers, it is youth's demands and expectations which will mold the future. Although there are many complaints about specific issues and programs, the underlying issue has to do with youths' participation in the processes by which decisions are made about their lives.

The key word here is relevance, pertinence to the matter at hand. In our context, relevance means dealing with the obvious, real problems which we have the capacity to solve but which we have left unsolved—for example, the hunger that exists in a nation capable of producing more food than any other but which has not found ways to distribute food to those in need.

In considering the various demands coming from the community we must recognize first that we are dealing with a pluralistic society, not a homogenous one. Many different groups, with differing values and goals, are competing for available resources. Each group has its own perception of the kinds of service it needs. We must take into account the many "as if" poor—those who see themselves in need and resent others who, apparently, are demanding and receiving benefits the "as ifs" lack. What is worse, the "as ifs" consider them-

selves forced, through taxation, to provide to others benefits which they themselves lack. In considering the community's needs and demands, we must ask how all groups—not only blacks and other minorities—can be better served. Last, we must remember that in this pluralistic society, there are large segments who feel it essential to preserve society (and the university) as it is, to resist change.

II

The question before us is whether the formal university is able to respond sufficiently to the new demands of the pluralistic community. The university *has* been trying to make those modifications necessary to offer new services to the community and its people, but it is no easier for a university to redefine and change its functions than it is for an individual to recognize and give up a neurotic defense that is no longer necessary to his well-being. Having visited innumerable university campuses while working for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, I am convinced that these campuses are struggling to meet what they perceive the community's needs to be. Invariably, however, the universities' perceptions of community needs are found to bear little resemblance to the needs felt by the community. This conclusion is reached not only by "activist" students, but by mayors, other city officials, community groups—by everyone who is concerned with the problems of the urban scene.

(A clarification is needed here. Although we label it "urban," we are dealing not with an urban problem but with a broad set of social problems. Because these social problems are frequently related to areas of high density [cities and urban communities], it has become convenient to use "urban" as a descriptive category. We must be careful not to confuse the geographic location with the nature of the problem and to identify one with the other.)

To resume, our own University can truthfully state that it has been responding to the challenges of the present. It can point to the many programs, formal and informal, provided through University Extension. Moreover, it can point to changes within its own basic structure, to the major modifications each separate department has been attempting in its own programs. Each discipline's field is expanding, encroaching into areas traditionally "owned" by other disciplines; the result is a cross-fertilization process (area studies) which can deal more specifically with current problems than can the traditional professions or disciplines.

My point, however, is that the current response is not sufficient to meet the demands and expectations of the present. The kinds of problems we now face can no longer be dealt with by the kinds of discipline-oriented operations around which our University is structured. It is critical that the university alter its traditional ways, and the first step is to redefine the problem.

Education is a service; the university is a service institution. When we discuss the university's responsiveness to demands we are talking about specific demands made by other institutions and organizations. The universities have largely met the pressures and expectations for general education, for technical training, for research, and even for sub-professional education. No educational system, geared to serve the society which created it, has ever accepted the odd, peculiar, or atypical. None, heretofore, has ever deliberately offered training designed to change the very society that created it. But this is precisely the demand now being made. Society is asking the university to provide those services that will lead to social modification and change.

A university has no monopoly on education; it is but one of the community agencies concerned with education, service, and research. A university must, then, become an active partner of all those community groups, institutions, agencies, and teaching programs which are involved in the problems of the urban community.

In accepting the university as one agent of change, we must not forget that every agent of change is changed by its client, whether it is psychotherapist by patient, minister by parishioner, or consultant by corporation. When, therefore, we discuss university service, our concern is the university's methods of working with people as co-equals in finding solutions to problems. Each contributor offers his particular skill and ability in the development of programs and activities. Let us look again at the university as a service institution and consider the key questions: service to whom, for whom, and with whom?

The basic notion is that service can no longer be delivered to people; service is an active partnership among the several persons and interests involved in the community program. Thus, no one serves clients. Clients and practitioners cooperatively develop a program of education and action. Instead of service being "delivered" to people, a collaborative relationship among colleagues must evolve—a cooperative relationship between the server and the

served, the teacher and the student, the researcher and the researched. In such a relationship, it would be impossible at times to determine which person is in which role: who is learning, who is being researched, and, really, who the client is.

Let us look at the university's specific ability to offer service and to respond to social demands in this type of collaborative relationship. If we decide that the present university is meeting the expectations and demands of some parts of society (as it clearly is), we must ask who and what these parts are. There are large segments of our society whose needs are being met. The system by which the academic world operates does produce certain products demanded by some of its clients. A university capable of producing not only Ph.D.'s but Nobel Laureates is obviously contributing to our society's leadership.

But is it not possible for this asset to be a liability when the university attempts to meet new kinds of demands from the broader society?

If we are to learn how to deal with real problems and issues, academic knowledge and dispassionate analysis are not enough. It seems to me that unless all concerned are directly involved in these real problems and issues, we cannot learn nor can we teach others methods of direct action and intervention.

We must ask whether universities, in their present form, are capable of making the modifications and changes required. Can institutions modify and change themselves? Can our University respond adequately to the confrontations not only of the students, but of the problems? Can it give up its fragmented orientation towards problems (i.e., academic departments) and deal with the issue in a holistic way? Can it deal simultaneously with the problems of merit and of equity? The demands of the present embody pluralistic expectation which require of the university an ever-evolving internal structure and an ever-changing relationship with the broad society in order to encourage and maximize differences in activities and programs. I believe that a university can meet these demands only if it leaves the boundaries of its campus and accepts the society at large as an educating society with which it participates in a collaborative venture to solve the problems. I am concerned that the formal university will not be able to deal with the current problems, that neither its academic structure nor extension facilities will be adequate. If the university is to be useful in the area of urban ser-

vice, it must have the ability, if not to change itself, then to help create a new institution which does have the capacity to meet the needs of the present. I am proposing, therefore, that our University lead the way in establishing a new kind of school for social clinicians—a "college in dispersion."

III

A college in dispersion centers around the concept of intervention. It develops the knowledge on which intervention can be based, and it trains social-urban clinicians who wish to participate in changing our society.

This is a new type of school, differing radically in structure and content from a formal college. It can be defined in part by a statement of what its location and curriculum are *not*. A college in dispersion has neither fixed location nor fixed curriculum. Its basic external structure comprises the totality of resources in the surrounding community, using them as its classrooms, research laboratories, and campus. Its basic concern and teaching content are the active intervention, involvement, and participation in changes required by the community around it.

A limited comparison can be made to a medical school for, within the present university structure, the medical school is the prime organization that teaches how to intervene in other people's lives; that is, how to assist patients in coping with their illnesses and problems. Insofar as medicine orients its research and training toward the processes of intervention, it is a better model for comparison than an institution which trains technicians or is concerned with academic issues.

The college in dispersion is a school for social clinicians. Like the medical school, it is based on the concept of intervention. Established in various community locations, it provides settings analogous to the training hospital wherein a reciprocal relationship can develop between client and intervener and services can be exchanged.

Let me suggest the nature of administration, faculty, and the teaching/research function of this new school I am proposing. I say "suggest," rather than "define," because these elements will be fluid, changing in specifics to meet the specifics of demand.

The college in dispersion should be administered by a nonprofit corporation, either one similar to that of a training hospital associated with a medical school or one set up by the community itself

in which public and private institutions, community groups, and the university join in a collaborative, corporate development to sponsor the new school. In some ways the nonprofit corporation might resemble a network-organized consultation firm that is hired to develop special programs and, on occasion, may undertake their direct management as well. The nonprofit corporate structure also provides a useful body to absorb some of the impact generated by political issues which inevitably arise around the kinds of problems, and the methods used to tackle them, that are intrinsic to a college in dispersion.

A college in dispersion is an initiating agency for a broad set of activities and programs taking place within and outside its physical boundaries. It is able to evolve and change continually, to maintain flexibility, and to attract new people (faculty and students) into its programs. Its structure must not solidify nor its program become one of self-perpetuating activity.

The faculty is drawn from all community groups. Members recruited from the formal university would have a clinical rather than an academic orientation. The basic requirement is concern with action and participation in the community. Persons working with any community program (mayor's office, poverty program, urban coalition) could be recruited, and their area of operation would then become one campus and one field of study of the college in dispersion. The faculty will also include professionals, skilled in such areas as health, housing, law, etc. Each faculty member would join primarily because of his underlying concern with intervention to produce clinical change in the urban community. The sole criterion a faculty member must meet is concern with improving the quality of urban life.

I should emphasize a point indicated earlier. This new type of school I propose is involved with more than the problems just of the poor and of minority groups. It is equally concerned with improving service to people who feel that, though they have money and resources, they are still not getting adequate service. Problems such as smog control, transportation, municipal finance, and use of recreation resources are as important social problems for this school as are the needs of minorities isolated in central cities.

Although I stress that all aspects of the new school be flexible, there are a few caveats to be observed. One concerns the reward system: it must differ radically from that found in the formal uni-

versity. The rewards in the new school must apply to participation in problem solving—the better the clinician, the greater the reward. The new system rewards teaching, working with the community, and direct involvement in joint enterprise on critical issues rather than research or academic productivity as such. (For this reason alone, the branch connected with the formal university must have its independent structure.)

The salary scale is an important factor. Many faculty members at a formal university earn a good part of their income and spend much of their time as private consultants. In the college in dispersion, faculty would devote full time to the job and be paid at a scale commensurate with full-time teaching and related services rather than at the usual academic scales.

The college in dispersion should attract students from every part of the community, from business and government as well as from minority and academic groups. It should attract the bright high-school student as well as the fifth-grade drop-out. It should have educational service opportunities for the young, middle-aged, and old. The faculty are students as well as professors; the students teach as well as study. When the society at large becomes an educating society, it provides the opportunities for life-long learning.

Since, at present, the urgent need is to assist those among us who must acquire competence to cope with their total society, the new school must necessarily give priority to attracting such persons (who come, primarily, from the minorities) and to working out programs with and for them. But it must not become a school exclusively for minorities. The mix in staff and student body, the mix in studies, training, and research—all should result in social patterns that students and staff will naturally introduce into other relationships, so that the new patterns become reflected in the broad society. The working relationships which evolve in the new school should become the pattern of relationships and opportunities that exist in the broad community and that are as open to all persons as they are in the college in dispersion.

The teaching and research in this collaborative venture would be carried out by various participants, each contributing in accordance with his abilities, interests, and concerns. There would be a constant interplay of the skills of the professional (including the highly trained academic) with the experience and first-hand knowledge of community persons.

To repeat, each community group or program becomes a branch of the college in dispersion. In addition, part of the teaching program could be connected to the formal university—in fact, such a program at our University could initiate the college in dispersion. But the program must have its own independent structure, its own reward system, its own focuses, and its own manner of dealing with problems.

Whatever the particular branch, the training provided by a college in dispersion centers around field experience in the community. A large part of the curriculum should be concerned with the processes of changing institutions and with understanding the tools by which change can be achieved. The skills of specialists in social psychology, change theory, and psychotherapy will be needed as well as those of economists, planners, and others who deal in evaluating conditions necessary for change.

The programs that evolve should have a core of training for all people at all levels who are interested in intervening in urban area problems. These courses should provide the basic knowledge, and the common language needed to understand the community. Much of the training should be carried out in the community itself, the students working on real problems, supervised by staff, but in a spirit of collegiality rather than in the formal student-faculty relationship. The school's graduates should be capable of taking jobs in our communities and finding more adequate ways to cope with our problems; we can expect that some will transfer to the formal university, contributing to basic research and to the teaching profession.

Research programs would be organized to discover what must be known in order to intervene actively and cope with specific social problems. The underlying framework of all research would be the improvement of our total competence to deal with the multifaceted problems we face. There would be basic research on the knowledge required to understand intervention and to accomplish change as well as research on specific problems. It is not possible to list all the specific problems, or even all the general areas of problems, that a college in dispersion would study. They would include problems of geographic area (cities, planning districts, water-supply districts, neighborhood corporations, etc.) and problems of function, those not defined by geography but which affect all persons (health systems, insurance programs, etc.).

The new school must develop the knowledge necessary to parti-

cipate in and change society, and must be able to transmit that knowledge to those who participate. The people who come out of the new school should be able to deal with social problems, to diagnose and intervene in them. They should have the tools to cope with these problems. The school must gear its programs toward action and change. It must be actively involved in changing the urban scene and must involve its students, from undergraduate through professional training, with other agencies concerned with the community—agencies such as junior colleges, hospitals, social agencies, city programs, and the like. At all its various locations, the college in dispersion must develop its teaching around action projects, utilizing real experiences in which faculty and students jointly cope with the problems at hand.

The kinds of jobs the new school should undertake are those within our communities and institutions, in the public and private sectors, in working with the poor and the "as if" poor and even with the well-to-do. It is hoped that the body of knowledge developed by the school will enable it to work on ways of improving the equity relationship between people; that some means will be found to aid those of us who have heretofore not been able "to make it," whether because we lack ability or because our society has not provided the opportunity or resources to develop our abilities.

The college in dispersion, because it is a flexible cooperative venture, can provide service to the community in many ways. Programs, plans, consultations, and even training programs should evolve from a variety of sources. Some can develop out of the professional competence of the university personnel. Others can result from meeting the needs of the community participants. The community itself, through its residents, public officials, and urban organizations, will make demands for new kinds of activities that should be provided. Each contributor offers his particular skill and ability in the development of programs and activities. In short, the college in dispersion is one whose campus is the total community and whose concern is to help create an educating society by utilizing fully all the resources of the community.

IV

What, then, is the present university's responsibility to this much larger program? The skills required to participate in service exist within both the university and the community. The community's

responsibility will be to make its needs clearly known, the university's to facilitate and develop service relationships in the community.

Our University does have a responsibility to offer educational and related services to the community, but its services should be designed to meet real needs, those critical needs which somehow either fall outside the purview of other social institutions or are not affected by the traditional methods and content employed.

The very nature of these unmet needs virtually rules out the university as the *sole* resource for providing service. If the service is to meet real needs, the university cannot unilaterally determine the structure and content of service, nor restrict the locations where it can be offered, nor require a minimum number of students, nor set fees to cover actual operating costs. The administration of individual programs designed to meet the community's critical social needs requires a flexibility, adaptability, informality, and ability to try out experimental—even seemingly crackpot—approaches.

The program I propose would be one that is responsive to the needs and expectations of the community; all of its users would play a role in defining the problems to be undertaken. The university must make its resources available to the community, but how do we determine what resources are needed? If the primary need is for a "university of the streets," a formal university is ill-equipped to devise the multiple, informal methods needed to meet such needs directly. Perhaps the appropriate service it can perform is to train those people involved in the university of the streets who work in the junior and community colleges, and to facilitate their work by making university resources available to them. The university can bring to their informal centers, serving a neighborhood of a block or two, the supplementary aids needed to carry out programs the neighborhood people have requested. In a sense, these small centers become the "Head Start" programs for adults—bridging the gap between them and the high school adult-education programs.

Our University can contribute leadership to the joint group that organizes the new college in dispersion, and it can establish a branch of that college on each University campus. As one participant in an educating society, the University can work with and sponsor new kinds of activities in the community. The University could develop an urban management school which would offer a degree program requiring perhaps a year's work, but to which people from the com-

munity, rich and poor, could enter for short periods on an informal basis. The University could help create "schools of entry," whose specific function would be preparing persons to qualify for formal admission. "Schools of entry" can be developed by working with local communities, or through high schools and other established local programs, through the paraeducational institutions that are being developed (e.g., the federal manpower programs), and through junior colleges that, as in California, are especially good potential recruiting places for people who want to enter a formal university system.

My aim in this paper was to challenge our ability to develop a new conception of ourselves and to redefine the problem of how a university meets urban needs. We are dealing with the process of change and must remember that the very idea of major change stimulates fear while the process itself is painful and arduous. I have tried to be provocative because it is my strong feeling that all institutions, including universities, are more capable of dealing with the problems of the past than they are with those of the present or future.



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