

I'll start where George Henderson left off. It isn't an accident that we haven't had any serious trouble, and it won't be an accident if we do have trouble. If we have trouble on this campus, it will be because a few people, surrounded by a much larger number of people, refused to be open and honest and loving. It will be because they were too concerned about their own selfish interests, their own thing, to recognize the legitimate thoughtful interests of others. Surely, there could be a nut, someone who wants to tear the place down, that we can't really prevent. But if that nut induces a large number of people to support him, we've failed. And I don't hesitate to admit in advance that I personally would have failed. Some very dear friends of mine—Perkins at Cornell, for example—have fallen because of student problems on the campus.

I think that the president of a major university in America today occupies probably the most important and the most difficult political job in America. My job is essentially politics. It is essentially that of understanding the nature of the forces that act upon a major social institution in the country. The forces that derive from different students having different aspirations.

The forces that derive from minority groups, Little Red, four men quitting the basketball team. Lawyers who want to do their separate thing. Doctors who have a certain pressure on the medical school. Alumni who see their institution changing in ways either that they don't understand or they don't like. Regents who have pressure put upon them from their constituency, proper pressure, to change the views and thoughts of those who manage and are responsible for the policies of the institution. Pressure from the faculty, faculty who teach essentially the same way that faculties have taught for 300 years when we know a great deal more about education and learning than we knew 300 years ago. Faculty who, in some instances, are more afraid of students than students are afraid of them. Students who are brought here because of their parents and peer pressures to get a degree, a certificate, and who don't really give a damn about learning anything. They in turn press on the institution in order to make it easy for them to obtain that certificate. Pressures will arise from the national scene in the changing nature of the support of the federal government for education.

Pressures arise from different people's views of Vietnam and what the institution of militarism in the past decade has done to the country which is reflected in whether or not, for example, we should have an ROTC and whether or not the university is a proper sponsoring agent for a military training program.

The president of a university today is no longer a fund raiser, though he's that, or responsible for the academic program, though he's that, but more than anything else he stands as an agent between the several important pressures of the society. Hopefully he is not a compromiser; hopefully he takes stands when it's necessary on issues that are deep and important to the institution for which he has responsibility, and hopefully he has the courage not to take stands on issues which are none of the university's business. The things for which the university must stand or fail as an institution is first and foremost the freedom of people to inquire, to speak, to listen, to hear, and to write, so

Dr. J. Herbert Hollomon . . .

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long as it doesn't violate the laws of the land. If that right, that privilege, that freedom is compromised, then the university is finished and so is America finished. If those from the outside would impose upon me the right to determine what a student learns or a faculty member says and I take on that dictatorial position, then I may decide next week that I don't like the Baptist church or I don't like Catholics or I don't like American democracy. In the administration of a university I must never be given the privilege, the right, the power of censorship, for if I accept that power, then I become a Hitler, I become an autocrat. Though from time to time I would like to tell people what to think, there are particular groups from time to time that it would give me great pleasure to tell, I must not be given that privilege nor that power. I must do everything in the world that I can to resist it.

Whether busing happens in Oklahoma City is not the business of the institution that is the University of Oklahoma. It may be the view of some of its faculty and students and alumni and administrators, but it's not our business as an institution. It's not our business as an institution to determine what the laws of obscenity are. It's our business to attempt to live within the laws, but it's not our business to say what the laws ought to be. That's the society's business.

So one of the great problems of an administrator in a university is to have people understand what he can and can't do. Let's say a teacher is teaching his students about some subject that people outside the university consider to be distasteful. Perhaps it has some logical application to the overall subject. I



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Several nights ago 13 or 14 athletes came in and spent from 7 o'clock until 11 o'clock with a number of other people that were present. They came without fear, without feeling that somebody was going to do something to them because they complained. Secondly, they came really without an interest about what happened to them but hopefully for what could make it better for future athletes. We talked honestly and openly, without any hate, with, I hope, an understanding that I couldn't solve all problems, but at least the people who were there were willing to listen, were willing to accept the fact that an athlete is first a human being, second a student, and third an athlete. That's a very important thing to have him accept, because some athletes don't believe that's the way they're treated. I think they felt in that discussion that they were being treated as human beings. They knew at the end of the evening that everything they said was not going to be accepted and that even some of the things they said were wrong. Certainly no promises were made to solve the problems that they brought up, but that isn't really what they wanted. What they wanted, more than anything else, was someone to hear them and respect them as individuals.

Now, what's gone wrong with those who would be activists and tear the place down is that these people do not believe that they and their ideas would be accepted. They do not believe the actions they would take within the system would change a thing — they no longer believe it, and therefore they're violent. They have been rejected usually as children by their parents. Most of the youngsters who are really disturbed on this campus and others, if you talk to them and get just an inch below the surface, they'll say, "I can't talk to my mother and father. They hate me. They reject me because I am different." That's the root of the problem of both the black who has no mother and father and the white suburbanite orphan whose parents pay no attention to him. We can't fix the problem on a college campus. We can't be the parents of youngsters who've never had any. All we can do is help and try to set the matter a little bit more right.

A university president in administration holds 17,000 or 20,000 students, to some degree, in his hand and also has a responsibility, as best he can, to live up to those deepest values in the society. One of these is that the law and the custom shall protect the minority against the majority and that the majority's rights and freedoms may not be disposed of by a violent and insidious minority. That's the deepest problem a university administrator faces.

**QUESTION:** We've talked a lot about social issues, but we haven't talked about excellence in training.

**HOLLOMON:** Let me first talk about what I think the role of the university is. It has many roles, one of which is to be conservative: it is to conserve the knowledge of the society and the culture and pass it on. You can do that in a number of ways: we teach language, we teach about the political systems, we teach all sorts of things that we wouldn't teach if we were in Africa, for example. Just imagine transplanting the University of Oklahoma to another culture. What would we teach? It would be vastly different. So one of the functions of a university is to provide as best

couldn't stop him from teaching that if I wanted to. And furthermore, I shouldn't. Now, if a teacher is immoral; if he does not do his job; if he in some way uses his powers as a teacher to inculcate a doctrine, which doctrine has no basis, then he is subject to appropriate charges and there are ways of dealing with him within the University. An administrator of a university is caught in the middle always. He must resist doing those things for which he should not be given the power, and he must also provide an environment whereby he can hear and be acquainted with views from all sides.

I have been criticized, for example, for something which is called my "style." I don't quite know what that is, but on the other hand the "style" of a university president in America has, in my view, got to change. It has to be a style which gives the honest impression to students that you'll shoot straight with them, to faculty that you understand to some degree as best you can, their motivations, to alumni to legislators, to people that at least you're a man of integrity. But more important than anything else the style of a modern university president has, in my view, got to be one of openness, of a willingness to hear, to listen, and to judge, and then make his own position clear, forcefully and without equivocation.

I believe, as Dr. Henderson says, that we are beginning to establish at the University of Oklahoma a degree of responsible openness, responsible participation which will provide an example for other institutions all over this country.



it can the nature of the culture and the society, the systems, the myths of the society.

The second function, and this is the one we don't like and where the social problem comes in, in part, is to encourage people to question the culture, the society, the myths. When you see a lot of youngsters questioning their parents, their teachers, the government and so on, it's a sign the educational system is working. Everyone complains that the inquisitiveness of children ages 5 and 6 is killed by the school system. They wish it wouldn't happen. So sometimes it doesn't happen, and we get a youngster who questions, and we worry. So a university must encourage the critical evaluation of a question.

A third function of the university is to provide people who will enter the society in such a way that they will continue to contribute to the society in engineering or law or medicine or political science or whatever.

Another role of the university is to provide not only for the students but for the public as well in preserving and advancing the culture. The institution also should provide critical information in government or politics or law which is needed by the society that the society can't produce otherwise.

The university will stand or fall predominantly on the quality of the students it produces, a quality measured in several ways. One is how well do they do the things for which they became specialists. Another is how well can they continue to learn all the rest of their lives. Another is what sort of citizen is he; is he willing to participate in politics and the social problems of the society. These are some of the things that determine whether a university is good, bad or indifferent.

Now, you ask the question can we now talk about such things as quality of engineering or quality of political science or what have you. This university should, in my opinion, develop those academic programs in which it shall be expert, in which it shall be first rate. That judgment must be made for this region in this time recognizing the students they are affecting are going to have to be affected 20 years from now. So you have to anticipate, and it is in those fields the university should make its primary academic commitment.

On the other hand, there are a lot of myths about academic excellence. The first and most important thing people have learned about academic excellence is that the quality of incoming students sets the quality of academic excellence of an institution — the quality of the incoming student, not the quality of the teachers. The performance of outgoing students at universities or colleges is primarily determined by the incoming student. Faculties and libraries and all the other things are important, but in the first approximation the student is the determining factor. Second, most learning by students is peer learning, not learning from the faculty. Thirdly, faculties don't teach. If anyone thinks that anyone is taught anything, they've got rocks in their heads. Students are encouraged to learn, and unless that happens there's no way in which a man standing up in front of people, giving them books to read, can teach a person anything. All that can happen is that somehow he encourages a student to learn.

with Kitty Shanklin Rountree





There are some great teachers here who are not necessarily the ones who give great lectures. They are the people who somehow touch a student. For four years we give lectures and examinations and then we turn him out and say, go learn on your own. That's what we should be trying to teach him: how to learn on his own.

The quality of the faculty really affects in my opinion mostly the image of the institution which in turn attracts quality students. This is an advertising principle, although in higher education it's not called that. Ask for instance why Harvard or Berkeley (social unrest aside) are thought to be great institutions. It's because at Harvard they take the upper one tenth of one per cent of all the students in the United States. Last year at Harvard they had more than enough applicants to fill their freshman class with people who got 36 on the ACT test. They could have filled the whole freshman class with people with 36 scores. Swarthmore, where one of my youngsters happens to go, has nobody, nobody mind you except maybe 2 or 3 per cent of the freshman class, who was not either valedictorian or number one in his class. Now, they can't fail. It wouldn't matter what their faculty was like. So for this reason the faculty members who are important are people like George Henderson. When Dr. Henderson says he teaches outside the classroom, he really means it. He touches people and opens their minds, and then they learn.

Now we also need experts to be critical, to set the pace. It is the quality of the students, however, that is important. And I don't necessarily mean quality as measured by the ACT test or high school grades. Quality can be measured in many ways.

**QUESTION:** Where does this start? For instance is it the quality of the student that is important rather than the teacher in grade school, junior high, where?

**HOLLOMON:** In my opinion even in the elementary and secondary levels most teaching is done by encouraging the youngster to learn. If you can get that youngster in second grade to want to read books, to want to, I don't necessarily care what he learns. You get him to want to learn that math. Now it may take practice to master the subject, but first you have to make him want to take the time to learn. Take the violin. You can't teach someone to play the violin. You have to make him want to play the violin. Now how do you do that? You say, "Get home and learn how to play. Come back every now and then, and I'll criticize you because you're not doing it right." Now, another question, is a great violinist necessarily a good teacher? Not necessarily. A great critic of the violin is a good teacher. But there are very few great violin teachers who are also great violinists. So what does a great violin teacher do? He tries to inspire you to love the violin. Most teaching is inspiration, criticism, standards, setting an example. There are many things people know how to do that they don't know how to teach. Now, to set an example is a great way to teach. This is why I said that the style of a university president is so important because if he's going to teach a youngster to be open and honest he cannot himself be dishonest. If you want the students to participate in the society without tearing it down, then obey the laws, that's another way of teaching.

