

Tomorrow

editorial analysis

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Events of the past few months have perhaps more than anything served to reinforce existing public concerns about higher education. Those inside and outside the college campuses cannot help but worry what the future holds.

Hardly a campus in this nation has remained untouched by dissidence. Some have experienced death and physical ruin. In the face of these events colleges and universities must take a long hard look at themselves and the people they serve. But an inward look will not finish the job. They must look out as well to the job they are doing in educating the public about their institutions.

Peter Schrag, editor of "Change Magazine," hit the heart of the problem when he said "As organizers of their commodity — knowledge, understanding, experience — universities are doing a very bad job. They're still wedded to antiquated or obsolescent ways of organization."

It must have become obvious by now to a great many people that no matter how hard the universities try, no matter how fiscally poor they claim to be, significant amounts of new money will not be forthcoming. That is not to say that appropriations will not increase or private funds will not grow. What it means is that the always-hoped-for, never-realized doubling of a

university's budget through a miracle of legislation simply will not happen — not tomorrow, not next year, not next decade.

There is a saturation point, and it has been reached. The myth that a college education is the yellow brick road to job supremacy is fading quickly. Young people are finding that there is valuable, marketable experience to be had outside the college campus.

Parents and people whose children have long since left school are beginning to suspect that perhaps higher education is not the panacea.

And so, colleges and universities must change. First they must reorient their thinking to the fact that everything is not going to get bigger and better. Instead they must begin worrying the idea that maybe their institutions are as big, sometimes bigger, than they should be. They are going to have to put personalities aside and coldly assess their existing programs in terms of total effectiveness. They are going to have to stop offering some of their big programs, not because the programs aren't good but because the same program is available elsewhere at as good or better a level.

Not all the blame for the present condition of higher education can be laid at the feet of the institutions themselves. The ivory tower concept has a certain realism about it. It is difficult to see your own weaknesses when you live with them every day.

FALL HEAD-COUNT ENROLLMENTS IN THE OKLAHOMA STATE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION, 1968-1969 ACTUAL, WITH PROJECTIONS TO 1980

Year	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Graduate	Special	Head-Count
1968	28,902	18,225	12,726	12,555	8,864	1,706	82,978
1969	29,140	18,111	13,415	13,395	9,523	1,738	85,322
1970	32,125	18,920	13,816	14,347	10,306	2,845	92,359
1971	34,195	20,729	14,404	14,886	11,132	—	95,346
1972	35,104	21,687	15,306	15,510	12,047	—	99,654
1973	36,733	22,570	15,990	16,452	12,977	—	104,722
1974	38,050	23,394	16,651	17,178	14,017	—	109,290
1975	39,333	24,265	17,280	17,874	15,166	—	113,918
1976	40,600	25,116	18,018	18,599	16,395	—	118,688
1977	41,907	25,961	18,612	19,266	17,735	—	123,481
1978	43,230	26,823	19,235	19,959	19,166	—	128,413
1979	44,532	28,202	19,903	20,648	20,780	—	134,065
1980	45,728	28,723	20,584	21,368	22,332	—	138,735
10-Yr. Inc.	42.3%	51.8%	49.0%	48.9%	116.7%	—	50.2%

SOURCE: Files of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

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The institutions have been allowed to become what they are by their governing boards, their state legislatures, their state regents. This is true not only in Oklahoma but throughout the nation. Virtually no one has been willing to tell us that we cannot begin a new program because it already is being offered somewhere else within a reasonable distance. A realistic look at the University of Oklahoma would turn up several areas that could be eliminated. Granted it would create an immediate hardship on faculty and staff and would require the students to transfer to another university. But in the long run OU is too big in terms of its academic offerings. Because we try to do too many things, we do very few of them well.

The problems inherent in higher education today have not gone unnoticed by the students themselves. Like their elders they question the validity of an institution that can be the scene of violent death. They resent being numbers in a 600-seat classroom. It irritates them to have their enrollments fouled up by a computer. It embarrasses them as human beings to find they have attended the wrong class all semester and no one noticed or cared.

Certainly there are numbers of parents who will not send their children to schools like this. They fear the violent atmosphere; they question the educational value of mass lectures; they worry about what they see as a spiraling liberalism on the campus, both political and moral.

Probably, however, those parents are worrying about the wrong things for the wrong reasons. Violent atmosphere, for example, appears to be spawned on campuses more by outside sources than from within. At campus after campus it has turned out to be the Nation-

al Guard or the state police who turned dissent into bloodshed, either through lack of sufficient training or failure to adhere to proven crowd control guidelines.

There are those who condone that kind of treatment. They are wrong. A four-letter word, a thrown brick or a mass march is not worth a human life.

The University of Oklahoma this year faced real dissent for the first time. The killing of the four students at Kent State plus the expansion of the war into Cambodia ignited a spark in the minds of many students. They felt they had to make their feelings known, and, like their fellow students across the nation, they met at rallies, marched for peace, argued. Some picked the ROTC as the target of their dissent—not as a direct attack on the young men in the program but as a protest against the military posture of this country. Some boycotted classes for a day, picketing peacefully outside buildings across the campus.

What made OU different from other schools was probably threefold. The number of hard-core radicals bent on making their point at any price is small at OU. The campus police force is well disciplined, well trained and headed by a man who is not unwilling to resist powerful pressure to bring in outside law enforcement bodies. But probably most important were the students and faculty members themselves. Here there were more than 100 who were willing to sacrifice their own personal political and social credos — on both right and left — in the cause of peace. "Cool it" was the byword of the day. Students and faculty members went days on end without sleep, spending their every waking hour in the company of the dissenters, talking, persuading, interceding, cooling frayed tempers. Their work and the cooperation they got from their fel-

BACHELOR'S AND FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREES CONFERRED BY OKLAHOMA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, 1966-67, AS COMPARED WITH DEGREES CONFERRED NATIONALLY IN 1966-67

Division of Study	Oklahoma ^a		Aggregate U. S. ^b	
	No.	%	No.	%
Agriculture	142	1.5	6,258	1.0
Architecture	59	0.6	2,867	0.5
Biological Science	361	3.9	28,993	4.9
Business and Commerce	1,441	15.5	69,687	11.7
EDUCATION	2,894	31.2	120,879	20.3
Engineering	480	5.2	36,188	6.1
English and Journalism	507	5.5	45,949	7.7
Fine and Applied Arts	323	3.5	21,569	3.6
Foreign Language and Literature	100	1.1	17,025	2.9
Forestry	30	0.3	1,631	0.3
Geography	25	0.3	2,163	0.4
Health Professions	425	4.6	29,371	4.9
Home Economics	183	2.0	6,335	1.1
Law	251	2.7	15,339	2.6
Library Science	17	0.2	701	0.1
Mathematical Subjects	307	3.3	21,308	3.6
Military Science	23	0.2	1,931	0.3
Philosophy	43	0.4	5,420	0.9
Physical Sciences	253	2.7	17,794	3.0
Psychology	202	2.2	19,496	3.3
Religion	111	1.2	8,168	1.4
Social Sciences	962	10.4	104,771	17.6
Trade and Industrial Training	40	0.4	2,741	0.4
Other Fields	98	1.1	8,278	1.4
TOTAL	9,277	100.0	594,862	100.0

^aAdapted from data in the files of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

^bUSOE, *Higher Education: Earned Degrees Conferred: Part B — Institutional Data: 1966-67, Table 6.*

low students and faculty members kept the campus cool. There were no injuries, few arrests, only minor disruptions of the normal campus processes.

True, there were laws violated at the University. There are laws against public use of profanity. But in such situations the consequences of enforcing such laws must be weighed against the effect such enforcement might have.

No one can say whether what happened at OU will happen again. Events like that are dictated by time and circumstance. The University did not emerge unscathed. In the eyes of many people throughout the state, the administration came off as weak-kneed; it was said that the laws should have been enforced and that absolute order should have been maintained at any price. But had OU been another Kent State or Jackson,

would those critics have agreed that force was the answer?

The University's security chief, William T. Jones, probably angered a lot of people when he publicly stated, "I'm not concerned with whether the outer community thinks I did a good job or bad job. We are close to this community and are better able to assess the complexities of the situation. It is our job to preserve the peace and to protect the lives of the people here. I don't think it's necessary to always go on the basis of showing force."

The spring term is over now. At OU it ended as it always does — with the last hot-sweet days of classes, the seemingly never-ending final examinations, and the proud Sunday night commencement. Other schools were not so fortunate. Violence, burned buildings, or

even complete shut down of the institution were not confined to what some view as the radical institutions of the east and west coasts. It was everywhere. At one time more than 200 schools were closed by strikes or by official order. Lesser strikes were going on some 250 other campuses.

In the Midwest and Southwest Iowa State University experienced violence and many arrests; the union burned at the University of Kansas; Southern Illinois was closed; there were fires at the University of Iowa, Colorado State, Colorado College, the University of Nevada and the University of Alabama, to name a few. At the University of Texas crowds of protesting students marched on the state capitol, closing it for a day.

Closing of many schools left graduating seniors in a turmoil, and everywhere there were campuses in shambles. Somehow these schools must piece their institutions back together, regain the confidence of their alumni and future and present students, rebuild their burned buildings, recruit new faculty, hire new employees. And it won't be an easy task.

At the University of Oklahoma the process will be easier because the dissent was peaceful. But there is confidence to be regained, there is recruiting to be done, there are still the old issues of salaries and class sizes and outmoded buildings.

The greater problem is not solved, however. The University of Oklahoma and its sister institutions in Oklahoma must move quickly and precisely to make sure that nothing more than lawful, peaceful dissent ever occurs. That requires long-range planning, planning that is realistic, planning that can include short-range goals that will bring immediate results as well as goals that will be realized 10 or 20 or 30 years from now.

This year the State Regents for Higher Education, on direction of the legislature, studied the future of higher education in Oklahoma. They prepared two reports, one on junior colleges and the other called "The Role and Scope of Oklahoma Higher Education."

The crux of the 106-page report is summed up in 18 recommendations for the decade ahead. In part they closely parallel recommendations in "The Future of the University," the master plan developed by the University itself.

The recommendations are these:

1. The functions of the state universities should be modified to place greater emphasis on upper division and graduate work.
2. Lower division enrollments at the universities should be stabilized at about the current level, and admission policies for freshmen should be revised upward.
3. The functions of the six state colleges should be modified for greater emphasis on upper division and master's levels and they should broaden their offerings and decrease emphasis on teacher education.
4. The six state colleges should revise their admission policies upward.
5. The four state senior colleges also should emphasize work at the upper division level and decrease their emphasis on teacher education.
6. The senior colleges should revise their admis-

sion standards upward.

7. The two-year and community junior colleges should have exclusive responsibility for students who do not plan to get a degree and should develop programs in general, vocational-technical, adult, community service, remedial education.
8. The State Regents, in cooperation with the institutions, should develop a system of televised instruction to meet the needs of business and industry.
9. The formula for allotting funds should be revised to give recognition to programs rather than numbers of students.
10. The State Regents should revise their policy on off-campus classes for a more coordinated system of extension offerings.
11. Following publication of the statewide long-range plan next fall, each institution should develop its own plan within that context and have it approved by the State Regents.
12. The State Regents should create an ad hoc committee from both public and private higher education to study such things as the semester, trimester, credit hour, and calendar.
13. An advisory committee from the institutions should serve the State Regents in considering new graduate programs; additional advice should be sought outside the state.
14. The State Regents should review the whole range of student assistance programs.
15. Governmental control of higher education should be restructured for a consistent pattern of governance — whether each should have a board; whether there should be only one board for all; whether they should be grouped by common goal.
16. The functions of Langston University should be revised to create an experimental and demonstration center with appropriate upgrading of faculty and student assistance.
17. The names of institutions in the system should be changed or modified to reflect their functions.
18. New avenues of cooperation between public and private higher education should be explored.

Of the 18 recommendations some are essentially minor in scope. Others, such as shifting the emphasis in the system, are far reaching in their consequence. The report doesn't go nearly far enough. In some instances it is still bound to the aging precepts that have guided (or misguided) higher education for centuries.

What is important is that the institutions themselves not fail. Despite their shortcomings, the nations' colleges and universities are basically sound. The fundamental educational process is good and it is necessary. But higher education is not peopled by miracle men, and the college graduate is not possessed of spiritual insight. It's time everyone stopped expecting that kind of result. Higher education won't cure the ills of mankind; in fact it probably even causes some of them. Only man can cure his own ills, and education should be put back in its proper place as a means, not an end.

—CBR