



Five years ago the idea would have been absurd. Today it is an urgently relevant question . . . one that is uppermost in the minds of campus officials. For institutions that depend upon public confidence and support for their financial welfare, their freedom, and their continued existence, it is perhaps the *ultimate* question:

# Are Americans Losing Faith in their Colleges?

A SPECIAL REPORT

were not so complex. But in fact these are serious problems to which there are no easy answers. We wrestle with them every day.

You are certainly right to be worried about the existence of this university (and all campuses) as a forum for the free discussion of ideas. There are many who would use the American college or university in a political struggle to advance their own political ideas. Even well-meaning students would do so, because they do not understand the dangers of such action. Those of us charged with the responsibility must fight with all our wit and strength to prevent that from happening.

I do not think we can win by using force or repression. Rather, we must continue to work with students to convince them that their efforts to politicize the university can destroy it, and this would be terribly costly to society as a whole. When and if the line must be drawn, then we will draw it and deal with the consequences. But we will do everything we can to avoid actions that will limit our options and bring about the violence and polarization that have crippled some great institutions.

It is clear to me that the colleges and universities in America are, to a very considerable degree, reflecting the problems and divisions of the larger society. That can be unpleasant and painful, but it is in some ways a proper and very useful role for a college or university to play.

Consider, if you will, society's other institutions. Can you think of any that are not in similar turmoil? The church, the public schools, the courts, the city halls, the political parties, the family—all of these institutions are also feeling the profound pressures of change, and all are struggling to adapt to problems and needs that no society has ever faced before. If we as citizens and members of these institutions respond simply by withdrawing from them or repudiating them, then I fear not only for the future of our institutions but for the future of our nation. Disraeli once said, "Individuals may form communities, but only institutions can make a nation."

**T**HIS UNIVERSITY IS INDEED INVOLVED in the controversy which engulfs America and from which progress and constructive change will one day come. Our students and faculty are indeed concerned and vocal about the rights of their fellow citizens, about the war, about the environment, about the values of our society. If it were otherwise, our alumni and alumnae would certainly be justified in refusing to support us.

Very simply, Mr. Y, the current generation of young people will one day run this nation. They are here and cannot be traded in for a quieter, more polite, more docile group. Nor should anyone want to trade them in. This university cannot abandon them, or isolate them, or reject them. Our mission is to work with these young people, to sensitize them, humanize them, educate them, liberate them from their ignorances and prejudices. We owe that to the students, but even more to the country and to our alumni and alumnae. The course is uncharted, to be sure; it will be uncomfortable at times and somewhat hazardous in spots; but it is the only course a great university can follow.

I'm sorry you won't be on board.

Sincerely,  
*President X*



**T**HE LETTERS on the preceding two pages typify a problem of growing seriousness for U.S. colleges and universities: More and more Americans—alumni, parents, politicians, and the general public—are dissatisfied with the way things have been going on the nation's campuses.

"For the first time in history," says Roger A. Freeman, former special assistant to President Nixon, "it appears that the profound faith of the American people in their educational institutions has been shaken, and their belief in the wisdom of our educational leaders and in the soundness of their goals or practices has turned to doubt and even to outright disapproval."

The people's faith has been shaken by many things: campus violence, student protest, permissiveness, a lack of strict discipline, politicization of the campus, the rejection of values and mores long-cherished by the larger society. Complicating the problem is a clash of life-styles between the generations which has raised a deafening static and made communication extremely difficult between students and their off-campus elders. (At one meeting not long ago, an angry alumnus turned on a student and shouted, "I just can't hear you. Your hair is in my ears.")

How many people are disenchanted, how strongly they feel, and how they will act to express their discontent is not yet clear. But there is little doubt about the feelings and actions of many political leaders at all levels of government. Vice President Spiro T. Agnew spoke for many of them:

"When one looks back across the history of the last decade—at the smoking ruins of a score of college buildings, at the outbreaks of illegal and violent protests and disorders on hundreds of college campuses, at the regular harassment and interruption and shouting down of speakers, at the totalitarian spirit evident among thousands of students and hundreds of faculty members, at the decline of genuine academic freedom to speak and teach and learn—that record hardly warrants a roaring vote of confidence in the academic community that presided over the disaster."

Many state legislators are indicating by their actions that they share the Vice President's views. Thirty-two states have passed laws to establish or tighten campus regulations against disruption and to punish student and faculty offenders and, in some cases, the institutions themselves. A number of states have added restrictive amendments to appropriations bills, thus using budget allocations as leverage to bring colleges and universities into line.

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## **'The public has clearly indicated displeasure with higher education'**

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The chancellor of California's state college system described the trend last fall:

"When I recently asked a legislator, '. . . Why did the legislature take what appears to me, and to most faculty and administrators in the state college system, to be punitive action in denying [a] cost-of-living increase to professors?'—he replied, 'Because it was the public's will.'

"We find ourselves confronted with a situation unlike that of any previous year. The 'public,' through the legislature, has clearly indicated displeasure with higher education . . . We must face the fact that the public mood, as reflected in the legislature, has taken a substantial turn against higher education overall."

A similar mood prevails in Washington. Federal support of higher education has slowed. Congressmen who have been friendly to higher education in the past openly admit that they face growing resistance to their efforts to provide funds for new and existing programs. Rep. Edith Green, chairman of the House of Representatives subcommittee that has jurisdiction over bills affecting colleges and universities, observed during the last session, "It would be most unwise to try to bring to the floor this year a bill on higher education, because the climate is so unfavorable."

**I**F THIS APPARENT LOSS OF FAITH PERSISTS, America's institutions of higher education will be in deep trouble. Even *with* the full confidence of the American people, most of the nation's colleges and universities would be experiencing financial difficulties. *Without* the public's confidence, it is now evident that large numbers of those institutions simply cannot survive.

Three years ago, the editors of this report published a special article on the financial outlook of American higher education at that time. The article began: "We are facing what might easily become a crisis in the financing of American higher education." And it concluded: "Unless the American people—especially the college and university alumni—can come alive to the



private—and in every part of the country. For example:

▶ One morning several months ago, the trustees of a member-institution of the prestigious Association of American Universities spent several hours discussing the eventual necessity of scaling down to a small-college operation.

▶ Saint Louis University has closed its school of dentistry and is phasing out its school of engineering.

▶ Tufts University has eliminated its school of theology.

▶ Case Western Reserve University has terminated its graduate physical therapy program.

▶ A large university in the South has been forced to phase out six Ph.D. programs.

▶ Huston-Tillotson College has cut back on its athletic program, reduced the number of course offerings, and eliminated several faculty positions.

▶ Reed College has taken steps to cut the size of its student body and to raise the student-faculty ratio.

▶ A high-priced nuclear reactor at an Eastern state university stands idle for lack of research support and operational funds.

The Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, president of the University of Notre Dame, sums it up this way: "In the 25 years that I have been associated with the university . . . I can think of no period more difficult than the present. Never before has the university taken on more tasks, and been asked to undertake many more, while the sources of support, both public and private, both moral and financial, seem to be drying up."

**T**HE FINANCIAL SITUATION is nowhere more urgent than in the medical schools. Forty-three of the country's 107 medical schools are in such severe financial straits that they are getting "disaster grants" from the federal government this year.

Dr. John Cooper, president of the Association of American Medical Colleges, warns that "the whole financial structure of our medical schools is gravely threatened." He blames cuts in federal funding (which provides more than 50 per cent of many medical school budgets) as well as inflation and reductions in Medicaid to hospitals.

Cutbacks in federal programs have also begun to erode the quality and effectiveness of academic science. Prominent scientists, who are not given to overdramatizing the facts, have issued urgent warnings.

Jerome Wiesner, provost of M.I.T. and former Presidential science adviser, said: "Cutbacks now in scientific research may cost the nation its leadership in

science and technology, and its economic well-being in the decades ahead."

Teams of scientists and technicians, painstakingly organized over the years, are now being scattered. Training and educational programs that provided the country with scientific manpower are faltering, and some have been forced to shut down.

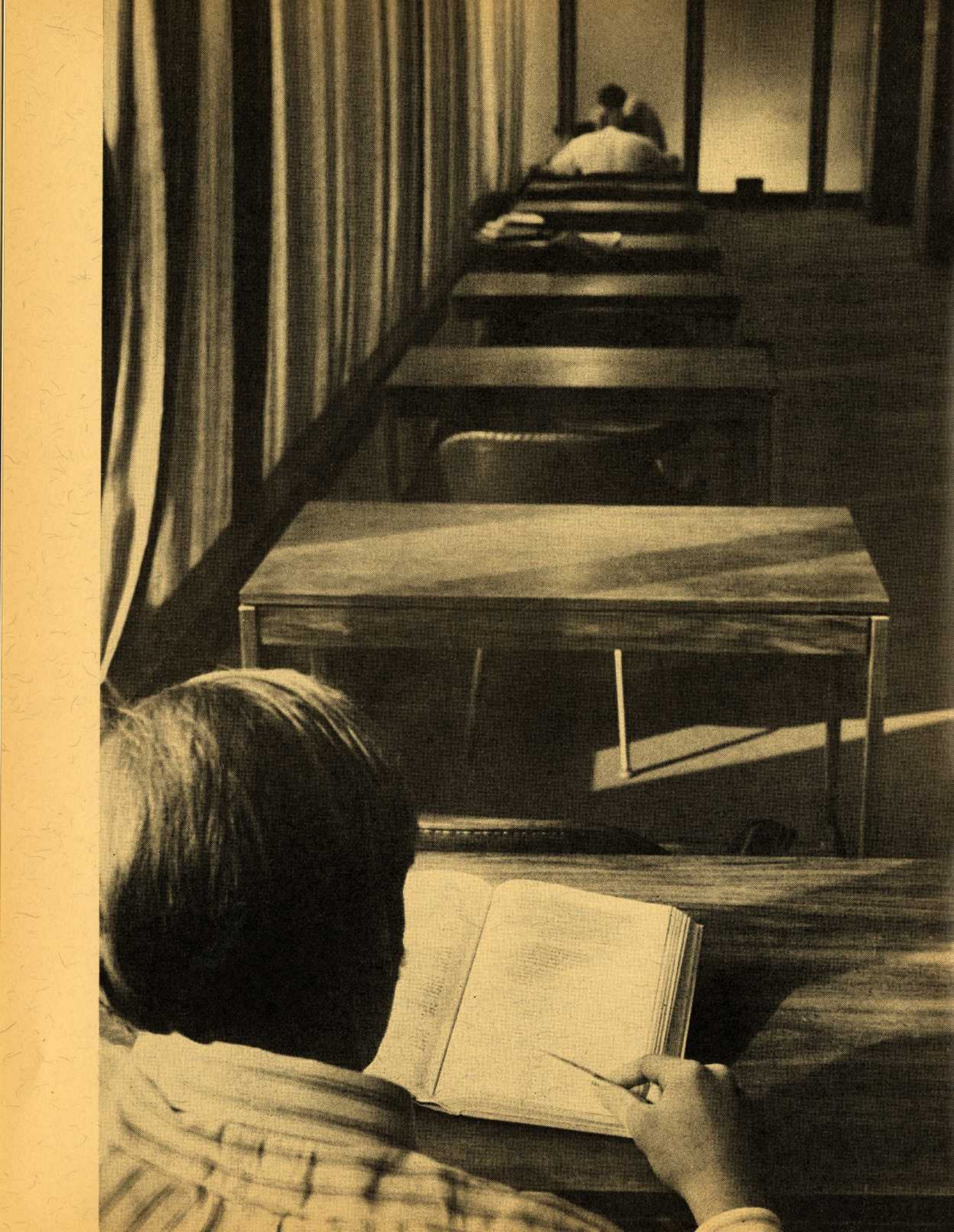
Philip Handler, president of the National Academy of Sciences, has said: "Our national apparatus for the conduct of research and scholarship is not yet dismantled, but it is falling into shambles." The universities are the backbone of that apparatus. When support of the universities weakens, science weakens.

**W**HAT ALL THIS ADDS UP TO is a crisis of unprecedented proportions for higher education—"the greatest financial crisis it has ever had," in the words of Clark Kerr, chairman of the authoritative Carnegie Commission on Higher Education.

Dr. Kerr's commission recently determined that two in every three U.S. colleges and universities were facing financial "hard times." Some 540 institutions, the commission estimated, were already "in financial difficulty"; another 1,000 were found to be "headed for financial trouble."

"Serious enough to be called a depression," was the estimate of Earl F. Cheit, professor of business administration at the University of California, who studied higher education institutions of all types for the Carnegie Commission and concluded that almost all colleges and universities eventually may be in financial difficulty. (In the course of his study, Mr. Cheit found that most college presidents believed that the loss of public confidence in higher education was, in large measure, at the root of much of the trouble.)

**A**LARMS about higher education's financial plight have been raised regularly over the years, simply because financial hardship has always been a fact of life for colleges and universities. In the past, the warnings and admonitions have produced at least enough response to provide some monetary relief and to forestall disaster. But the problem has grown steadily worse in recent years, and educators are pessimistic about the federal government's, or the state legislatures', or the alumni's coming to the rescue this time. In fact, the turmoil on the campuses and the growing antagonism toward the academic community could result in the situation becoming even worse.



The basic fiscal problem of colleges and universities is rather simple. They are nonprofit institutions which depend for their income on tuition and fees, interest on endowment, private gifts, and government grants. Tuition and fees do not cover the cost of education, particularly of graduate education, so the difference must be made up from the other sources. For private institutions, that means endowment income and gifts and grants. For state institutions, it generally means legislative appropriations, with relatively small amounts coming from endowment or private gifts.

In recent years, both costs and income have gone up, but the former have risen considerably faster than the latter. The widening gap between income and expenditures would have been enough in itself to bring colleges and universities to the brink of financial crisis. Reductions in funding, particularly by the government, have pushed the institutions over the brink.

Federal support for higher education multiplied nearly fivefold from 1960 to 1971, but the rate has slackened sharply in the past three years. And the future is not very promising. The president of a Washington-based educational association said bluntly: "In Washington, there is a singular lack of enthusiasm for supporting higher education generally or private higher education in particular."

Highly placed Administration officials have pointed out that colleges and universities have received a great deal of federal money, but that the nation has many urgent problems and other high priorities that are competing for the tax dollar. It cannot be assumed, they add, that higher education will continue to receive such a substantial share of federal aid.

Recent actions make the point even more dramatically:

► The number of federally supported first-year graduate fellowships will be nearly 62 per cent lower in 1971-72 than in 1967-68.

► The National Science Foundation has announced that it will not continue to make grants for campus computer operations. The foundation reports that—when inflation is considered—federal funds for research at colleges and universities declined 11 per cent between fiscal 1967 and 1970.

► The Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, which helped to pay for much of the construction on campuses during the past seven years, is being phased out. In 1967 the outlay was \$700-million; last year President Nixon requested no funds for construction. Instead he proposed an interest subsidy to prompt insti-

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## The golden age:

**"we have discovered that it was only gold-plated"**

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tutions to borrow construction money from private sources. But a survey of state higher education commissions indicated that in most states fewer than 25 per cent of the institutions could borrow money on reasonable repayment terms in today's financial market. Six states reported that none of their private institutions could borrow money on reasonable terms.

► The federal government froze direct loans for academic facilities in 1968. On June 30, 1969, the Office of Education had \$223-million in applications for loans not approved and \$582-million in grants not approved. Since then only \$70-million has been made available for construction.

► The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has reduced its obligations to universities from \$130-million in 1969 to \$80-million in 1971.

"Losing federal support," says a university research scientist, "is almost worse than never having received it." Since much of higher education's expansion during the '60's was financed with federal funds, the withdrawal of federal assistance leaves the institutions with huge commitments and insufficient resources to meet them—commitments to faculty, to students, to programs.

The provost of a university in the Northeast notes wistfully: "A decade ago, we thought we were entering a golden age for higher education. Now we have discovered that it was only gold-plated."

**M**UCH THE SAME can be said about state funds for public higher education. The 50 states appropriated \$7-billion for 1970-71, nearly \$1-billion more than in any previous year and five times as much as in 1959-60. But a great part of this increase went for new facilities and new institutions to accommodate expanding enrollments, rather than for support of existing institutions that were struggling to maintain their regular programs. Since public institutions are not permitted to operate with fiscal deficits, the danger is that they will be forced to operate with quality deficits.

"Austerity operations are becoming a fact of life for



as occupying opposing camps. Campus unrest reflects and increases a more profound crisis in the nation as a whole."

Thus did the President's Commission on Campus Unrest begin its somber "call to the American people" last fall. Only greater tolerance and greater understanding on the part of all citizens, the commission declared, can heal the divisions.

If a major disaster for higher education and for society is to be averted, moderate Americans in every segment of society must make their voices heard and their influence felt. That effort must begin on the campuses, for the primary responsibility to increase understanding lies with the academic community.

Polls and studies have made it abundantly clear that the overwhelming majority of faculty members, students, and administrators are moderate people who reject violence as a means of changing either society or the university. These people have been largely silent and inactive; in the vacuum they have left, an impassioned and committed minority has sought to impose its views on the university and the society. The moderate majority must begin to use its collective power to re-establish the campus as a place of reason and free expression where violence will not be tolerated and harsh rhetoric is scorned.

The majority must also rethink and restate—clearly and forcefully—the purpose of our colleges and universities. It has become clear in recent years that too few Americans—both on and off the campus—understand the nature of colleges and universities, how they function, how they are governed, why they must be centers for criticism and controversy, and why they must always be free.

Only such a moderate consensus will be effective in restraining and neutralizing extremists at either end of the political spectrum. The goal is not to stifle dissent or resist reform. Rather, the goal is to preserve colleges and universities as institutions where peaceful dissent

and orderly change can flourish. Violence in the name of reform inevitably results in either repression or a new orthodoxy.

Polls and studies show that most alumni are also moderate people, that they support most of the campus reform that has occurred in recent years, that they share many of the concerns over social problems expressed by activist students, and that they sympathize with college officials in their difficult task of preserving freedom and order on the campus.

"What is surprising," notes a college alumni relations officer, "is not that some alumni are withdrawing their support, but that so many have continued to support us right through the crises and the turmoil." He went on to point out that only one of four alumni and alumnae, on the average, contributes to his or her alma mater. "Wouldn't it be something," he mused, "if the ones we never hear from rallied round us now." Wouldn't it indeed!

Alumni and alumnae, by virtue of their own educational experience and their relationship to colleges and universities, have a special role to play in helping to restore public confidence in higher education. They can make a special effort to inform themselves and to understand, and they can share their information and understanding with their fellow citizens. Too many Americans, influenced by mass-media coverage which invariably focuses on the turmoil, are ready to believe the worst about higher education, are willing to sanction the punishment of all colleges and universities in order to retaliate against the disruptive minority. Too many Americans have already forgotten the great positive contributions that colleges and universities have made to this nation during the past three decades. Here is where the alumni and alumnae can make a contribution as important as a monetary gift. They can seek to cool passions and to restore perspective. They can challenge and correct misinformation and misconceptions. They can restore the public confidence.

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