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Americans today are losing the constancy which once characterized their belief in their colleges. This modification in attitude, though related to the present surge for institutional accountability, results largely from personal reaction to the social change which engulfs America and all its institutions.

Basic assumptions known to undergird American civilization are being rigorously overthrown. The drastic changes which have ensued have had traumatic effects, polarizing family members, church members, professional groups, and other conventionally aligned people. Those who are steeped in tradition, occupying strategic positions of power, feel constantly threatened by people who are surfeited with tradition, and who are also in positions of power—often their own off-spring. Political leaders find themselves pitted against other leaders within their party. Church leaders oppose other leaders within their own denomination, to say nothing of those leaders of other sects and religious beliefs.

Awesome difficulties for all Americans exist in every area of activity, but they must be looked upon as temporary chaos. It is to the colleges and universities that America must turn to forage for the solutions.

Traditionally occupying a prestigious position in this country, higher education can withstand the present surge of criticism—even the greatly reduced financial assistance—by making use of two of the features which helped to create the dilemma.

(1) Modern technology, which created mass media and thereby heightened the effect and the impact of the social revolution, can now be used to create understanding through responsible communication.

(2) The masses, now being educated through opportunities heretofore denied all except the economically privileged, can become living testimonials for the advantages of an educational system which permits its youth to develop to the fullest of their potential regardless of financial status. The crisis in the nation like the crisis in higher education is reconcilable through goal-directed communication.

When a southern colonial governor during the 17th century charged that "learning has brought disobedience and heresy in the world," he also uttered a thanks to God that there were no "free schools or printing." Three hundred years later, twentieth-century Americans thank God for free schools, for printing and for all the other mass media, and even though there is a grappling with the problems of civil disobedience and citizen protest, Americans know that criticism and controversy are the essentials of a free society.

America's schools have been the major disseminators of the knowledge which foregoes any major change in a society. The modern campus must be a place of reason and free expression. Americans are now in the process of correcting a malpractice of the past, by inaugurating cultural studies and history of minority groups—the Negro or Black History and Culture; the Indian or Red Man's Culture and History;

# Alumni Response

college: a place  
for divergent groups  
to communicate

18

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of the lost faith'

the Mexican American or the Chicano History and Culture and many others.

When colleges can focalize opinions from traditionalism, liberalism, and radicalism, and become a communications site for divergent groups, whether from business and industry, farmers or laborers, Black or White or Red, the overwhelming problems now confronting higher education will seem less ominous and more resolvable.

No! Americans are not losing faith in their colleges. Although they are raising questions about accountability, with reasonable inducement, American citizens will respond to the call of college administrators and alumni.

## Carl Edwards, '70ba

I believe it is obvious that Americans have lost some faith in our colleges and universities. The drop in private contributions and the vast influx of bills into the state legislatures are perfect examples of this loss of faith.

Speaking from previous experiences, it is my opinion that the basic reasons for this loss of faith on the part of the alumni are related to a new and liberal attitude on the part of many faculty members and students. Just as many of the other institutions are being questioned as to their place in today's society, so also is the university and its function. With this evaluation comes practices which are very new from those in which alumni participated. Issues such as racial equality, war, birth control and the like are being discussed at length in the classroom while in the same classrooms as recently as six years ago the most controversial discussions centered around who really invented the automobile or if Shakespeare had a ghost writer. What this means is that a politicization of the campus has become prevalent. All of the sensational events have been spread far and wide by the mass media, but many of the really good things have somehow been lost in the shuffle. Therefore, it seems to me that a lack of knowledge on the part of the alumni has caused a good bit of the lost faith.

If I might reflect on a personal experience, I hope this point can be crystallized. Last year, I spent a good bit of time discussing the concept of student government and the university today with alumni groups and civic organizations. Characteristically we were met when we approached the speaker's stand with hostile faces, but at the end of every single discussion we found nothing but friends and many relieved individuals. It was my opinion as well as that of my colleagues that once these people heard what was really happening—good and bad—that faith was restored.

Surely when alumni read only about protests,

'there is no learning  
if only one side  
is heard'

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transition: curse  
of new proportions  
in this century

rock concerts, and "radical" professors they wonder if they should continue to contribute or if they should send their children there. However, it is my feeling and hope that everyone—students, faculty as well as alumni—will keep an open mind and try to understand that the university is a learning experience, and there is no learning if only one side is heard. Everyone should have the opportunity to see both sides of the issue before making their own decision.

Consequently, the university should remain open as a forum in which all issues can be discussed, but under no circumstances shall that university take a stand on these issues because when that occurs the very essence of the purpose of the institution is destroyed. Relatedly if all issues are going to be discussed and all who are affected are to have an opportunity to state their feelings then a structure must be established where each group has a right to expression in a legitimate way.

Concluding, I feel that Americans are losing faith in their universities, but if a sincere effort is made by all concerned to understand what is really occurring and to see why people act as they do, then a better feeling has to exist.

Andrew M. Coats, '57ba, '63Law

19

Any meaningful consideration of the question posed requires some definition of terms. If, by the term "faith" is meant the blind and unquestioning acceptance of the college as it now exists, then I think the answer to the question posed would be in the affirmative. It is in keeping with the temper of our times that our colleges and universities should be subjected to re-examination and re-evaluation. The college is not, however, the only one of our traditional institutions which is being subjected to such scrutiny.

An ancient Chinese, of especially malevolent nature, once placed a curse upon his neighbor which, roughly translated, said: "May you live in a time of transition." For those of us alive in the last half of the twentieth century, that curse has assumed proportions scarcely to be imagined by its framer.

In this time of exploding populations, of increasing awareness of the ecological havoc man has wrought upon his environment, of constant mind-bending assaults by the mass communications media upon the remaining fragments of our serenity, of our frustrating inability to disentangle ourselves from a war which we will not win and cannot lose, Americans are looking inquisitively at many of our institutions which were heretofore held sacred.

I believe this re-evaluation of traditional institutions and established approaches to problems in terms of contemporary needs is healthy. It indicates that we have, within our system of government, the flexibility and elasticity to accommodate change. It also means that Americans will probably never again accept, on

in the 21st century  
full support of all  
thinking alumni

20

# Alumni Response

faith, an institution or an idea without inquiry into its merits.

If, by the question posed we mean "are Americans disenchanted with our system of higher education," I think the answer is less clear, but probably rates a qualified negative. There can be no question but that the failure of college administrators to deal effectively with campus violence in the late 1960's severely damaged the image of colleges in the public eye. That a small minority of students was allowed to disrupt some college campuses to the extent that classes could not be held for those sincerely interested in learning will always be among the darkest pages in American education. These activities were viewed with alarm by the man-on-the-street. The suspicion ran rampant that these conditions could not exist without faculty support or at least faculty tolerance. If this were true, then college faculty members and administrators were either tacitly advocating violence as a method of change or they simply did not have the courage to deal with insurgent students. Neither alternative was acceptable to the American public.

That crisis seems to have passed. College administrators have learned to deal with threatened violence and to alleviate the violence-causing problems before direct confrontation between students and law enforcement officers create the inevitable spontaneous combustion. Order must be maintained, but maintained without repression. Our colleges must continue as a conveyance for traditional ideas, but they must also develop as a forum for analysis of contemporary thought. Campus freedom for the expression of all ideas, popular and unpopular, establishment and anti-establishment, traditional and revolutionary is essential. It is this academic freedom which has enabled our colleges and universities to produce the enlightened leadership which has created and molded our social system, and will enable us to preserve the significance of our present way of life and accommodate the change required by the problems of tomorrow.

Finally, if the question posed means "will Americans allow their colleges and universities to perish from lack of financial support," the answer is clearly in the negative. It is true that colleges are feeling the pinch of economic pressures. But, hasn't that always been true? Has there ever been a time when a college had more funds than it could spend? I think not.

The money problems of our state institutions are always with us. Legislators are faced with having to divide too little money among too many important state functions. Roads and highways, health, public schools, welfare, as well as higher education all take a bite from the tax dollar. But, the general health of higher education is not as poor as some writers would have us believe.

No country in history has ever been able to educate, at the college level, so large a percentage of its population as we are today. We are graduating more students from our colleges and universities today than ever before. Americans will not be denied their rights to a college education. I firmly believe that our colleges and universities will continue to prosper under the full support of all thinking Americans and will lead our society into the 21st Century.