



The Changing American Campus

For the first time in its history, the United States has in place a system of *mass* higher education, with 11 million people of all races and incomes attending some sort of college or university. This campus revolution has occurred during the 1970s while most attention has focused on declining overall enrollment, financial strains, and controversies, such as the *Bakke* case, over "affirmative action." Here sociologist David Riesman provides an overview; Martin Kaplan examines the old "elite schools"; journalist Larry Van Dyne analyzes community colleges, the newest wave; and economist Chester E. Finn, Jr. looks at the financial state of higher education.



BEYOND THE '60s

by David Riesman

In common parlance, "the 1960s" generally denotes the tumultuous period between the Kennedy assassination in 1963 and the beginning of Watergate in 1972. Like other stereotypical decades, the '60s are now seen retrospectively through a distorted lens. We forget, for example, that civil-rights activism, civil disobedience, and the antinuclear movement in the United States all began in the 1950s. By the same token, although American campuses achieved their greatest visibility in the press during the '60s, the 1970s are proving to be a more significant decade of change in higher education.

Consider these developments:

In 1972, in a move heralded by no banner headlines, Congress created the Basic Educational Opportunity Grants to pro-

vide tuition subsidies for needy students. Spiritual heir to the G.I. Bill, it was the most important piece of federal education legislation since Lincoln's day, when the Morrill Act established the land-grant college system. Basic grants (along with money from related programs) now provide some \$5 billion annually to 3 million American students.

These students are not admitted to college on the basis of national competitive examinations, as in Japan and many other industrial societies. Instead, the recent American pursuit of equal opportunity has led us to extend some sort of college education to virtually any taker, regardless of ability, willingness to pay, or quality of previous academic work.

Aided in part by federal aid (and legal pressure), in part by active recruiting by colleges and universities (with the elite public and private schools leading the way), both the proportion and the absolute numbers of minority students have risen dramatically in the 1970s. Black women for a long time had attended college (usually predominantly black colleges) in higher proportions than black men—often 100 percent higher. But during the 1970s, black males caught up with their female counterparts. There are currently more than 1 million black students in college, comprising 11 percent of total U.S. enrollment. The college-going rates for youths from middle- and lower-income black families are now actually higher than for comparable white families.* Race aside, women, for the first time in our history, now outnumber men in the freshman classes of U.S. postsecondary institutions.

Many of the new college students attend the growing urban universities. If we leave aside the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, King's College (which became Columbia) in New York, and a few others, colleges in the United States until the late 19th century were in small cities and towns, away from the

*Enrollments of students from Spanish-speaking families have risen less dramatically, however, in part because fewer of them are making it through high school. Although "Hispanic Americans" will be the largest officially designated U.S. minority group by the mid-1980s, in 1976 they made up only 4.4 percent of college students.

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alleged corruption of the metropolis.* Even after the land-grant colleges were established in 1862, most of the attention continued to go to rural areas.

Administrators Under Siege

During the last few years, the momentum has been in the other direction. The University of Massachusetts has opened a new Boston campus. The University of Missouri has taken over the once private University of Kansas City (and has also built a new branch in St. Louis); and the state system in Ohio has established Cleveland State University, taking over for this purpose the small kernel of Fenn College. One could go on. These new institutions may be seen as a second land-grant wave, belatedly reflecting a shift of the U.S. population to metropolitan areas.

Junior colleges—there were once 300 of them, mostly private, often for women only, frequently regarded as finishing schools—have been steadily supplanted by (mostly public) community colleges, many of them also urban, which now enroll one-third of all American college students. A thousand strong, the community colleges represent the kind of quick and enviable adaptation to consumer demand usually not associated with so entrenched an enterprise as higher education.

Finally, in the face of competing campus interests and government regulations, the task of being a university president is harder than ever before. The very nature of the office has changed; indeed, it may no longer be a job for an educator. In an earlier era, to be sure, those long-lived presidents who set their stamp on institutions, or created them *de novo*, were not universally popular. Woodrow Wilson had at least as many difficulties at Princeton as he did in the White House, and a look at the correspondence of Charles William Eliot during his 40-year tenure at Harvard reveals the many difficulties he encountered with faculty, governing boards, and influential Bostonians.

Yet university presidents today are required to spend more time managing than leading. They must contend with competing interests inside the university—among graduate schools and autarchic faculty members, unionized staff, and periodically mobilized students—that are as threatening as any pressures coming from the outside. Indeed, the external pressures sometimes seem relatively benign.

In my own view, for example, the fact that government

*Two Big Ten universities, Minnesota and Ohio State, are located in metropolitan centers; perhaps in Minnesota it was believed that, if heavily populated by Scandinavians, even a metropolis could be healthy.

bounty, on which virtually all schools depend, comes from more than 400 separate programs scattered through almost every federal agency (and overseen by over 100 congressional committees and subcommittees) is fortunate because no single jugular vein can be cut at the behest of an angry legislator. Yet the need to manage and keep track of funds from so many different sources, subject to different patterns of auditing and review, creates almost unmanageable problems for recipient institutions.

The sheer diversity of American higher education, so baffling to foreigners, baffles Americans as well. There were, at last official count, 3,075 accredited colleges and universities in the United States. Many of them have their own separate lobbies in Washington: the community colleges, the land-grant schools and other state universities, the former teachers colleges and regional state universities, the predominantly black schools, the private colleges. Not to mention women's schools and Catholic schools, and schools affiliated with dozens of other denominations. Higher education in this country has not evolved according to a master plan. Nor is there any kind of centralized federal ministry of education,* as there is in most of the rest of the world. (There are, however, central boards in many states to limit senseless competition by curbing, for example, the plans of a regional state college or university to establish a medical school or inaugurate new Ph.D. programs rivaling offerings at already established state and land-grant universities.)

A Hobbesian War?

Prior to the current economic crunch, the helter-skelter development, governance, and multiple financing of American colleges and universities was regarded as a great strength, an example of healthy pluralism. But in a time of "retrenchment," questions are being raised about the compatibility of pluralism and other values—for indeed, contrary to the American credo, good things are not always compatible. In a number of states, robust public institutions are continuing to expand even as academically distinguished private ones, with empty classrooms,

*In 1977, to honor a campaign pledge to the organized schoolteachers of the National Education Association (which has also been active in college organizing), the Carter administration proposed creation of a cabinet-level Department of Education. The hope was to give education greater dignity and visibility by separating it out from the mammoth Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. But many representatives of private higher education opposed the change, fearing especially that if specialized agencies such as the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation were to be included in the new Department, dominated as it is likely to be by concerns for public schools, the tendency toward a "leveling" in quality, already evident in much federal and administrative practice, would be enhanced.

“BASICS” VERSUS “SOFTNESS”

Newspapers—and the Bakke case—have made us aware of the increasing numbers of minority students in college. But we are less aware of the growing numbers of white college students who once would not have thought of themselves as “college material.” Faculty members are only now beginning to seek ways to cope with a student body—both in community colleges and in four-year schools—that is academically less well prepared and less motivated than in the past.

Professors in many colleges and universities respond to the new generation by pressing for greater stress on basic skills and a “core” body of knowledge that every student is expected to master. At the same time, individual university departments—acting much like the community colleges—feel compelled to compete for these students in a campus “free market.” The end result is “softness”: larger rewards (grade inflation) or lesser demands (fewer homework assignments), with the professor often being judged as an entertainer.

teeter towards bankruptcy. Many of the private schools could accept students now attending public institutions if they were given the per-student subsidy (or even much less) that the state provides. In such a situation, between the private and the public schools, as well as among the public schools themselves, the stage has been set for a Hobbesian war of all against all.

In some ways, that war has already begun, and the side that has given up the most ground is the private sector. This is a mischievous development. Worse, in terms of those subtle counterweights that help us to maintain a broad and balanced sense of what educational “quality” really is, the mischief promises to be quite substantial.

At the end of World War II, approximately half of the 1.5 million college and university students in the United States were educated in private institutions, the other half in state or locally supported schools. Today, private colleges educate barely one-fifth of American undergraduates.*

Only in the northeast quadrant of the United States, where private education had a head start, does the appeal of such schools still outshine that of the state universities. By contrast, in Michigan, few private colleges even come close to the major state schools in quality. When one goes further west and to the South, the state institutions have near-total hegemony. One senses this in Willie Morris’s description, in *North Toward*

*This is just the reverse of the case in Japan, where a growing number of private colleges and universities now enroll about 80 percent of the students; however, with exceptions such as Waseda and Keio, the most distinguished universities are public.

Home, of the allure of the University of Texas to a graduate of Yazoo City High School.

There is a handful of exceptions all around the country, including not just major private research universities like Stanford, but outstanding smaller private colleges and universities as well: Reed, Whitman, Carleton, Oberlin, Emory, Rice—schools that, if they did not already exist, no one in these tough times would now be likely to invent. Here, the academic standards are rigorous and purposeful. But the number of students these and other private institutions draw are insignificant compared with enrollments at the great state institutions such as the branches of the University of California, which take students from the state's entire socioeconomic spectrum and to which a well-to-do family is as likely to send its children as to Stanford.

Thus, it is not simply tuition that has taken private schools out of the market, for inflation spreads its penalties—and windfalls—all too unevenly. There are still millions of Americans who have enough, could save enough, or could safely borrow enough to send their children even to the most expensive private college. Indeed, some recent evidence (which few parents or politicians are predisposed to accept) suggests that middle-class families' gross incomes are actually *outpacing* the rate of inflation.*

At the heart of the problem is the fact that, as our culture becomes "democratized," the idea of attending a private school has come to seem unnatural and anachronistic to many people. To be sure, in a country the size of the United States there remain a good many affluent and ambitious children and parents who are determined to seek "the best" in higher education—Jewish families particularly, and, increasingly, families of Irish, Oriental, and other backgrounds, lacking regional or strong religious loyalties. But such traffic feeds only the big or small "brand-name" institutions.

Among one group of victims of this egalitarianism—the exclusively private single-sex colleges—panic has been spreading since the late 1950s. Future anthropologists will be amused to discover that Americans threw young people at each other in an unchaperoned way and regarded this as if it were the order of nature. Yet sex segregation, which has existed in some form for adolescents in all societies, was denounced as "unnatural," not just as discriminatory. It has become an increasingly idiosyn-

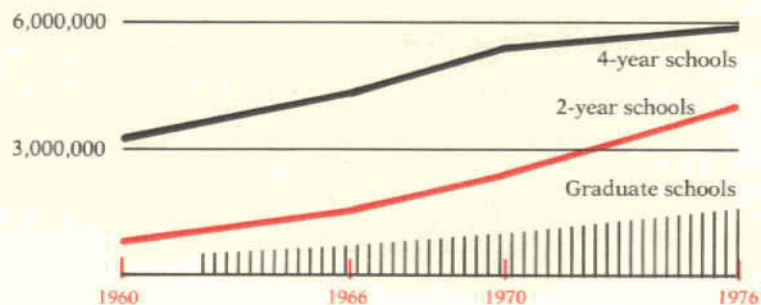
*According to the Congressional Budget Office, even when all taxes are subtracted, the median income of families with college-age students rose by about 75 percent between 1967 and 1976—just enough to cover the tuition climb of the same decade. The Congressional Research Service, however, has published rival findings suggesting that median income in fact lagged behind tuition by about 5 percent over the same period.

HIGHER EDUCATION: KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

INSTITUTIONS¹

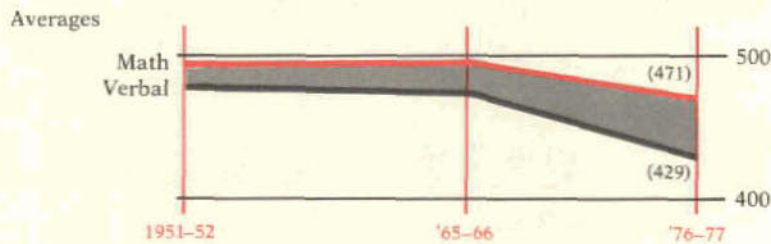
	1950	1960	1966	1970	1976
Public	638	721	806	1,101	1,467
Private	1,221	1,319	1,446	1,472	1,608
For women	258	259	283	193	125
For men	222	232	232	154	109
Co-ed	1,379	1,549	1,737	2,226	2,828
Religious	717	807	910	817	785
2-year	527	593	685	897	1,147
4-year	1,332	1,447	1,567	1,676	1,928
Total	1,859	2,040	2,252	2,573	3,075

The number of colleges and universities (above) continues to climb, but the number of religious and single-sex colleges has fallen from its 1966 peak. Big gains were made by community colleges, which now enroll one-third of the nation's 11 million college students (below). Of those attending community colleges, less than one-fourth go on to four-year schools, with figures ranging from 9 percent (Hispanics) to 26 percent (whites).

STUDENTS¹

Average pre-college Scholastic Aptitude Test scores for all students have declined, with the biggest drop in "verbal" scores (below), even as college enrollment has doubled since 1965. Of every 100 American youngsters in the fifth grade in 1948, 58 later graduated from high school, 15 from college; for 1968 fifth-graders, the figures were 75 and 24 (projected).

S.A.T. SCORES²



Sustained enrollment gains have raised the proportion of college graduates from 17.3 percent of the 22-year-old population in 1962 to 23.4 percent in 1976. In 1976, colleges and universities awarded nearly 1 million bachelor's degrees, more than 300,000 master's degrees, and about 35,000 Ph.D.'s. In both numbers and percentages, blacks and other minorities (below) now share increasingly in these rewards, although gains for Hispanics have not been dramatic.

MINORITY ENROLLMENTS³

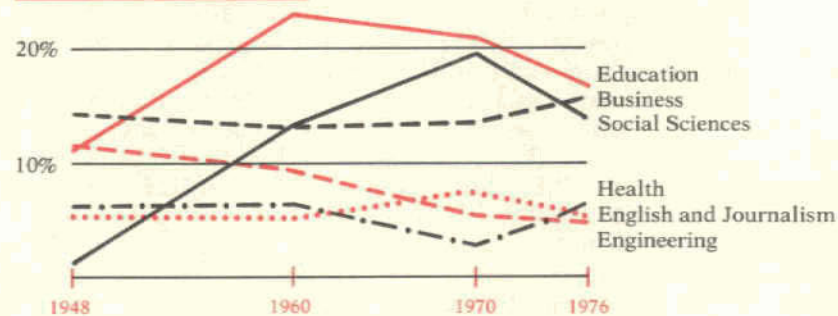
(Thousands of students and percentages of total undergraduate enrollment)

	1970		1974		1976	
Blacks	345	6.9%	508	9.0%	605	10.2%
American Indians	27	0.5	33	0.6	38	0.6
Hispanics	103	2.1	158	2.8	264	4.4
Asian-Americans	52	1.0	64	1.1	103	1.7
Total	526		763		1,011	

RELIGIOUS DISTRIBUTION⁴

	UNIVERSITIES		COLLEGES	
	High ranking	Low ranking	High ranking	Low ranking
FACULTY				
Protestant	59.9%	69.3%	64.7%	67.1%
Catholic	13.2	16.7	13.4	23.8
Jewish	17.2	7.2	13.2	3.3
Other	9.7	6.8	8.7	5.8
UNDERGRADUATE				
Protestant	43.2	57.0	65.2	57.2
Catholic	26.7	29.8	17.6	33.7
Jewish	20.1	7.9	10.1	3.7
Other	10.0	5.3	7.1	5.4

Diverse religious groups are represented as percentages of total faculty and undergraduates in U.S. institutions (above, with "ranking" of institutions derived from the 1967 Gourman Report). Catholics, 25 percent of the U.S. population, are still "under-represented" in high-ranking schools, but future increases seem likely. Freed from pre-war discrimination, Jews (2.8 percent of the U.S. population) now make an outsized contribution to "elite" schools. The changing percentage of bachelor's degrees awarded in each field (below) partly reflects shifting job opportunities.

B.A./B.S. DEGREES¹

Sources: ¹National Center for Education Statistics, *Department of Health, Education and Welfare*

²College Entrance Examination Board

³U.S. Office for Civil Rights

⁴Adapted from *The Academic Melting Pot* by Stephen Steinberg, © 1974 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

cratic choice to attend the few single-sex schools that remain. One element of American diversity is thus being lost—as is an opportunity for some young people who would benefit, for a time, from not having to compete *with* or *for* the opposite sex. Yet opportunity to choose is supposed to be one of the very essentials of democratization.

Another precariously perched group of private schools are the Fundamentalist Christian colleges, which combine Biblical literalism with the kind of high-powered education that is geared to “this-worldly” success. Many of the Fundamentalist institutions are in the South, such as Bob Jones University in South Carolina (which regards even the neighboring Southern Baptists at Furman University as heretics), or Harding College in Arkansas, which seeks to foster “a strong commitment to Christ and his kingdom” and forbids “drinking, gambling, dancing, hazing, obscene literature and pictures,” and smoking by women.*

Smallness vs. “Giantism”

Many of these schools—including Billy Graham’s alma mater, Wheaton College, in Illinois—have tough academic standards along with a driving sense of purpose. In times of trouble, they take comfort from their very belief that they are fighting a rearguard action against modernity (which, in many very sound ways, they are). But this sometimes leads them into costly confrontations with the insufficiently differentiated regulations of state and federal governments, and the prejudices of “enlightened secularists” who believe themselves to be apostles of tolerance.

Advocates of public higher education claim that there is virtually no innovation to be found in the private sector that cannot also be duplicated in the public sector. And indeed, the public schools are less monolithic than is often thought. The University of California, with its eight campuses, offers students everything from small-college clusters in rural settings of great natural beauty (Santa Cruz) to large urban universities (Los Angeles). And Evergreen State College, begun 10 years ago in Olympia, Washington, is more avowedly experimental than most private colleges.

Yet an important difference remains: Private colleges, and (with such exceptions as Northeastern and New York Univer-

*Fundamentalist religion does not necessarily mean political conservatism, however. At Michigan’s Calvin College, run by the Dutch Reformed Church, and far more traditional than anything found in the Netherlands, many of the faculty campaigned for George McGovern in 1972.

THE (UNCERTAIN) LEGACY OF BAKKE

The question of "reverse discrimination" in the case of Allan Bakke was resolved by the Supreme Court on June 28, 1978, but it remains very much a question in many other cases. The 38-year-old white engineer contended that he had been denied a place at the University of California-Davis medical school because of racial quotas that reserved 16 out of 100 openings for minority applicants. (Bakke entered the school last September.)

So finely balanced was the high court decision—Justice Lewis Powell voted with one bloc of four justices to award Bakke a place, then sided with the other four justices to uphold the consideration of race (but not explicit quotas) in the admissions process—that most lawyers regard it as an ambiguous precedent, not the last word on the legal complications of affirmative action in education.

Reverse discrimination suits, which have been cropping up in lower federal courts for some time, will no doubt continue. During the past year, judgments in lawsuits charging reverse discrimination or racial quotas have gone against Virginia Commonwealth University, the Georgetown University Law Center, the University of North Carolina, and Alabama State University, with the judge in the Virginia case expressing concern lest the rights of individual students or teachers be "flattened by the civil-rights steamroller."

Nor is the confusion limited to education. Similar suits have involved unions in New Orleans, police in Detroit, and city employees in Berkeley. How *Bakke* will shape future Supreme Court decisions is far from clear. Shortly after its decision in the case, the Supreme Court found in favor of the American Telephone and Telegraph Co. and its federally-approved system of "numerical goals" for hiring and promoting women and members of minority groups.

sity) most private universities as well, are on average far smaller than public ones. And while small size is not necessarily a virtue, it often is, particularly insofar as it continually reminds the sprawling public campuses that "giantism" may itself be a deformity. I am inclined to believe that, in the absence of the private model, state colleges and universities would never have sought to create enclaves of smallness. Clark Kerr (a graduate of tiny Swarthmore) has said that it was the model of the small, private Claremont Colleges that made Santa Cruz possible.

As noted above, private schools were the first actively to seek recruitment of minority students. Private colleges have also in fact (though by no means universally) possessed a somewhat greater degree of academic freedom and autonomy than public ones. Sheltered from the whims of angry governors and legislators, they set a standard for academic freedom and non-

interference that the public institutions can—and do—use in defending themselves.

State university officials recognize the importance of maintaining a private sector. State pride is a factor here. The state universities of Michigan and Texas, of Illinois and Indiana, Virginia and North Carolina, Washington and California all want to be world-class institutions on a level with Stanford, Chicago, and Yale, and they use these private models as spurs to their legislative supporters and beneficent graduates. They have even been able to maintain some selectivity, shunting those students with less demonstrable ability to the growing regional state colleges and universities.

These latter institutions, Avis-like in their resolve, hope to rival the state “flagship” campus. They have their own levers in our Hobbesian war. Most of the students beached by the 1960s demographic bulge swelled the enrollments of these colleges—not primarily those of the central university. The regional state colleges and universities are now large and well established. Given the sudden decline in funds and enrollments, and the general egalitarian temper of the times, these schools have no qualms about going to the mat for state money with the older, more prestigious parent campuses. The ineluctable, if not immediately perceptible consequence is that of “leveling.”

Spoiled Heirs

We have already seen how, in an effort to cut costs and avoid duplication, many states have established governing coordinating bodies whose task it is to allocate expenditures at each of the once relatively autonomous public universities. How does one now defend the superb library of the University of Illinois at Urbana—a world resource—when Southern Illinois University is forced to dismiss tenured faculty? How does one defend the eminence of the University of Wisconsin at Madison against the claims of the branch university in Milwaukee, the state’s largest urban center?

With leveling comes an erosion of student choice: If one institution is nearby, then why apply to any other since it is likely to be no different? In fact, most students today make no choice. Some two-thirds of “first time in college” freshmen apply to only one school, and they get in.

Even so, the decision is never irrevocable: American higher education offers students of all ages a second—indeed, a third and fourth—chance. Unlike the British (and Soviet) system, where a student is “tracked” by the age of 11 or 14, the American

system allows students to change their minds, drop out, transfer, take jobs, and come back without overmuch anguish.

Colleges, too, have second chances. They can adapt or react to the times; they can make an about-face in curriculum or in the type of student they hope to attract. There has always been room for innovation and fresh starts in American higher education, even if this freedom, which rested partly on expanding enrollments and funds, is more circumscribed now than it has been in many years.

What is really lacking is strong and visionary academic leadership. The democratization of search committees, the prospect of endless bureaucratic struggle, and the requirements of broad "sunshine laws" often make able candidates unwilling to offer themselves to universities. Many institutions wind up with conciliatory, faceless presidents, incapable either of vision or of the imaginative kind of planning required for what economist Kenneth Boulding has called "the management of decline."

But "decline," after all, is relative. Most of the rest of the world's universities are understaffed and overcrowded. The grumbling and querulousness common in American universities—serious complaints notwithstanding—resemble nothing so much as the moans of a spoiled heir still on a plateau of affluence.



THE ELITE SCHOOLS

by Martin Kaplan

There are perhaps 50 "elite" colleges and universities among the 3,000 institutions of higher education in the United States. They are, as their brochures plainly admit, highly selective; 3 out of 4 applicants for admission regularly fail to pass through the needle's eye. They are also expensive: \$8,000 or more for a year in collegiate heaven. A few of them (such as the University of California at Berkeley) are public schools, the flagship campuses of state institutions. But most are private in governance and finance—"independent" is the word their Washington lobbyists prefer to use—although many now receive more than half of their support from tax dollars.

These elite schools are not homogeneous. Some of them (like Swarthmore) are almost exclusively for undergraduates, but more often (as at the University of Chicago) the college belongs to a complex that also includes graduate and professional schools, laboratories, research institutes, and libraries. Some, like Emory and Vanderbilt, have traditionally strong regional ties; others, like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, have built exceptionally high reputations in particular fields. Still others have strong religious ties, such as Brandeis (Jewish) or Georgetown (Catholic). Often their faculties are internationally known and get regular invitations to government powwows and intellectual spas—Aspen, Bellagio, Woods Hole, L'Arcouest. And there are self-conscious sub-clubs within the 50—the Ivy League, the Little Three, the Seven Sisters, the Council of Twelve medical schools—to promote further recognition of their special relationship with excellence.

Such are the elite colleges and universities—"this incredible Disneyland," as one Harvard student aptly put it. The family resemblance that unites them springs partly from common resources (bright students, residential campuses, Nobel laureates), partly from common values.* Their ideology, articulated by college presidents with staggering frequency, is consistent with the enlightened liberalism of the larger society's

*One man's elite university or college may be another man's borderline case, but there is little argument among academics over the elite status of schools named in this essay.—ED.

elite culture. Academic freedom, the marketplace of ideas, a pluralism of approaches, the glorious lack of utility of the liberal arts, the intrinsic worth of knowledge—no anthropologist of the elite university would fail to collect these proud slogans.

But patient field work would also uncover another cluster of attitudes, notably a deep condescension toward the less privileged universities, whose tragic dependence on attracting students ("clientele") enforces a putative dilution of standards and pollution of the curriculum. As Joseph Epstein, editor of the *American Scholar*, put it recently, "Nearly everyone who teaches in a contemporary [non-elite] university has seen transcripts of students whose course lists read like the table of contents of *Harper's* or the *Atlantic*; or, worse, *Psychology Today*. Undergraduate education is fast coming to resemble nothing so much as a four-year magazine—and, like a magazine, once one has completed it, one might as well throw it away."

A New Diversity

But elite universities tacitly extend a long-term promissory note to their students: an elite *outcome* that lasts a lifetime. This is perhaps their most marketable distinction. The famous Grant Study of the "normal boy," begun jointly at Harvard in 1940 by philanthropist William T. Grant and the university's hygiene department, has doggedly followed with interviews and questionnaires the lives of several hundred Harvard men. In 1977 the director of the Grant Study published the check list he uses to sort alumni into "best outcomes" and "worst outcomes." The average *worst* outcome, one learns, involved a chap who "graduated from college, often with honors, had won a commission and good officer-fitness reports from the Army, had married and raised children who also completed college, was steadily employed as a professional or upper-echelon business executive, enjoyed an average income of more than \$25,000 in 1967, surpassed his father's occupational success, and at 45 was still in good physical health."

Not a bad prospect, then, for the elite university student. Graduates of such institutions take in, on the average, about 20 percent more income during their lifetimes than their counterparts (of comparable Scholastic Aptitude Test scores) holding less hallowed sheepskins. Bigger bucks are not the only satisfaction; the young elite graduate is encouraged to measure his—and increasingly, her—career success in intangible terms as well: "influence," "creativity," "prestige," "job satisfaction." Not to mention the warm, inner sensation that one is somehow

better, more sophisticated, more *worthy*.

Managing alumni affairs—and raising money—requires full-time, year-round staff at many elite institutions. Old Boys—tailored and tweedy, as well as the post-1960s design-research-and-good-dope variety—are notoriously keen to exercise university oversight and to carouse with their peers every fifth spring. The alumni magazines detail the good life to be had after graduation; their advertisements for Cunard cruises, “asset management,” and Oriental rugs confer consumer solidity on the Cardinal Newman boilerplate of the undergraduate years. As for editorial content, the “Stress and How to Cope With It” article seems to be the thriving genre in alumni publications. Better stressed and from Stanford, one infers, than “laid back” and from Contra Costa Community College.

Of the 11 million American undergraduates paying tuition at some sort of college today, perhaps 3 percent enjoy the special dividends of elite institutions. As always, their campus activities—newspapers, theaters, radio stations—are likely to be semiprofessional in quality. Their professors have probably contributed their surnames to “seminal” papers in their fields; the graduate students who actually do most of the teaching have survived innumerable byzantine screenings by the professoriat; and the undergraduates are not only bright but, for the first time in history, reflect the social diversity of the world outside.

Before World War II, elite institutions were largely WASP bastions with tacit quotas for Jews, Catholics, commuters, and urban public-school whiz kids. Women (except in colleges of their own) and blacks were largely absent. Nearly all that has changed. At Princeton, for example, both co-education and minority recruitment have arrived. Between 1972 and 1976, the proportion of “Hispanic-surname” undergraduates there increased sevenfold, and the proportion of total minority enrollment in the college rose by nearly 60 percent. Over the last decade, Stanford has more than doubled the number of blacks in the university while its Chicano enrollment rose by a factor of 10. Minorities (not including “Asian-Americans”) today account

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for 10 percent of its student body, four times what the figure was a decade ago.

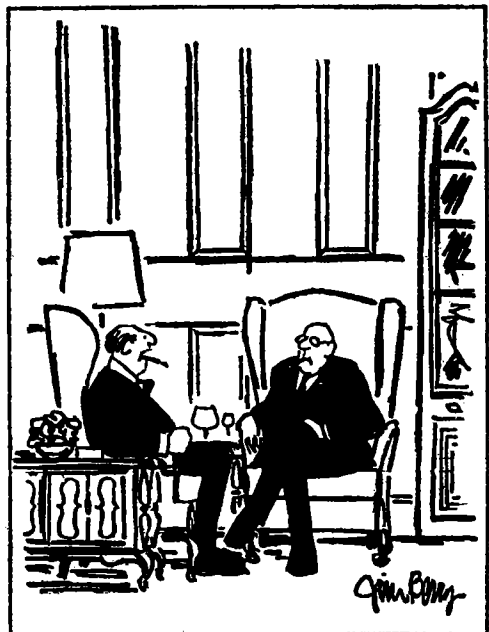
As for women, although affirmative action policies at the graduate school and faculty level are as yet far from effective, undergraduate co-education has been widely applauded as another forward step, even if some Old Boys grumble. Yet, as a way to maintain a unique institutional identity, some elite women's colleges—such as Smith, the largest, with 2,500 students—have resisted co-education. Some academic advantages may in fact follow from sex segregation: While few women at co-educational institutions major in the hard sciences and mathematics, at all-female Smith, 30 percent choose to spend their college years with graph paper and Bunsen burners.

Farewell to Activism

A decade ago, one fine spring morning, a Boston newspaper ran a headline screaming, "Rebels Maul Harvard Dean." Student strikes, campus bombings, and classroom disruptions were part of the elite university landscape from Berkeley to Columbia; so, too, were administrative trysts with local police squads, a persistent faculty willingness to seek federal contracts, and student loathing for the "best and brightest." But by nearly all accounts, today's elite undergraduates are busily reverting to more traditional outlets for their energies. Old-style fun has returned to the campus, albeit without the patrician gloss of yesteryear. A few years back, Dartmouth's Winter Carnival was languishing; this year, a snow sculpture graced nearly every dormitory and fraternity house. Fraternity pledging at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville is booming, and Yale's senior societies, though shorn of much mystique, are thriving; the formal dinner dance has returned unself-consciously to Princeton.

Careers and salary prospects are addressed by students with the kind of calculating sobriety one expects from a Morgan Guaranty Bank officer. Forty percent of Harvard's Class of '77 intended to continue their education in some sort of graduate school, the lowest percentage in the last 20 years; the other 60 percent said they were dubious about the rewards to be gained from graduate study. A recent list of the most popular courses at Harvard was led by the introductory "Principles of Economics," with nearly 1,000 students. The rest of the top 10, in order: "Oral and Early Literature" and "Cosmic Evolution" ("outrageous guts," or nondemanding courses, as one undergraduate describes them); then "Automatic Computing," "Organic

"CONFUSED—
of course, I'm confused!
I have a son at Vassar
and a daughter at Yale!"



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Chemistry," "Introduction to the History of Art" (to allay cocktail-party paranoia), "Organismic and Evolutionary Biology," "Introduction to the Calculus," "Introduction to Chemistry," and "Financial Accounting."

Pre-business and pre-medicine, with a bit of alleged academic excelsior: Faculty reverence for liberal arts and excellence notwithstanding, the elite curriculum's recent convergence with the community college's more candid identification with students' career goals is too dramatic to go unnoticed. Among many elite undergraduates such material aspirations take their toll. University psychiatric counseling centers are more popular on campus than even the Merrill Lynch recruiter. The mental health center at Princeton is heavily booked, with quick appointments for all but emergencies nearly impossible to obtain. The director of Harvard's health services describes his establishment's strategy this way: "We try to guide students into seeking self-esteem in their relations with others rather than through their achievements." He adds, "You shouldn't have to get accepted to law school or medical school to get self-esteem."

While careerism has flourished, political activism has been largely dormant since the September after Kent State. The uni-

versities' indirect investments in faraway South Africa have stirred the only notable campus political action. At Stanford, 294 students were arrested at an investment policy sit-in, and 58 were hauled in at Berkeley. Amherst and Harvard each decided to dump \$600,000 worth of their South Africa-related portfolios, and Citibank—sniffing a trend—has decided against future loans to Johannesburg.

But these episodic eruptions are the exception. Conservative intellectuals may argue that elite education's Disneyland now serves as an incubator for a facile, fashionable, and ultimately pernicious radicalism; but early returns suggest the opposite. "We are veterans of the Battle of Harvard," declared one senior speaker at Harvard's Class Day last year. "All too often the wounds inflicted here do not inform us, but rather frustrate or deaden us. We abandon social and personal ideals once held. We lose the confidence to take the road less traveled." What has been lost, in my view, is more than the youthful radicalism of the 1960s; the critical spirit itself seems to have been anesthetized by the narcissism of "let it be."

At best, as a University of Chicago graduate student put it, one sees "a longing for a moral issue"—that is, a galvanizing moral issue. Sociologist Martin Duberman's assessment of political life on campus is probably the most sanguine analysis coming from the academic Left:

The challenge to patriarchy and the challenge to capitalism are the only two radical games in town (the challenge to racism having long since receded). Currently [the players] view each other (with individual exceptions) with deep suspicion. Both have made significant gains in the past few years, with the feminist momentum more pronounced. But neither feminists nor socialists have captured the allegiance of the campus majority. Nor, unlike previous minorities (SDS, say, or the hippies), have they succeeded in setting a generation's agenda or style.

The only issue to galvanize Harvard students recently has been President Derek Bok's cost-cutting plan for the dining halls. A spring protest march through the Yard—"We like it hot," read one placard opposing the introduction of cold, Continental breakfasts—was staged as self-conscious parody of 1960s-style activism. (A "Stop Bombing Hanoi" sign was also spotted in the crowd.) Today John Connally and William Colby lecture on campuses without incident. Instead of issues (or villains), students focus on procedures: "We have a lot more Joe College

types serving on advisory boards," says one Stanford faculty member. Stagnant, smug, grade-grubbing, bored, quietist, tired: Relevant exceptions acknowledged, these are nevertheless the most common words one hears to describe student life on elite campuses today. Few would suggest, of course, that radicalism per se is a measure of worth; nor would everyone agree that the '60s activists were the best and brightest students of any recent generation. Yet the current lack of spark and spirit on campus suggests the absence of other qualities as well. Imagination? "Commitment"? A sense of the absurd?

While a melancholy fringe of young faculty and graduate students looks back at the '60s with nostalgia, elite university administrators also think longingly of those times—not for their almost seasonal confrontations, of course, but for the financial cushion the pre-OPEC, pre-inflation, Wall Street go-go years provided. Enrollments were still growing; portfolios were expanding; alumni felt good about giving. Administrative success could be measured by new buildings erected, juicy foundation and federal grants snagged, eminent scholars seduced away from rival institutions, and radical groups neutralized.

With Special Gravity

Leaner times have sired leaner styles. In 1967 the Ford Foundation gave \$71.8 million to higher education, including \$33 million in challenge grants alone. A decade later, Ford's university total had fallen to \$17.3 million. Between 1974 and 1978, the Danforth Foundation's higher-education grants were cut by 90 percent, and the number of prized graduate fellowships it awarded annually was reduced from 180 to 100. Government is now probably the most important single contributor to elite higher education's income through student aid and research grants; it has nevertheless become their public enemy No. 1. Today's annual reports by elite university presidents—complete with dark warnings of Washington intervention and the murderous costs of compliance with affirmative action and other regulations—could *mutatis mutandis* have come from any General Motors chairman fed up with bureaucratic meddling. While university administrators gird for battle with HEW, a vocal alliance of minorities, feminists, and their sympathizers among graduate students and professors is making common cause with Washington, seeing aggressive enforcement of civil-rights and sex-discrimination laws as the best hope for social progress in university policies.

Few episodes better illustrate more garishly the plight of

today's elite university administrators than last year's somewhat Romish search for a new president of Yale, whose money managers apparently thought the go-go years would go on forever.

First, Yale's financial problems were discussed with the special gravity once associated with deathbed reports on popes and prime ministers. During the 1977-78 Yale search, the provost of a distinguished West Coast university—a man otherwise known for his sobriety and judgment—was asked about Yale's multimillion-dollar deficit at a dinner party. "God," he exclaimed, "I hope that place doesn't go down."

A New Mission?

Second, with money tight, the ascendant model of the perfect elite administrator is the fiscal-expert-*cum*-hatchetman. One Yale candidate—with long experience as top administrator of a prestigious public university—was asked during an interview how Yale might have to change in the 1980s. After he had replied, speaking mainly of the need for vision and for adapting to new social challenges, a member of the search committee commented, "You know, you're the first candidate not to talk to us about installing a new computer management system."

Third, running an elite university is no longer the obvious top job for American academics aspiring to greatness. After five people had withdrawn from consideration for the Yale post or had turned down the job outright, Clark Kerr, former University of California president, told the *New York Times*, "It's the thinnest market I've ever seen for college presidents," and William P. Bundy, the Yale search committee chairman, admitted, "It's not a glamorous period for higher education. It's hard to be a great Olympian."

Fourth, the professors are restless. When A. Bartlett Giamatti, a respected Yale Renaissance scholar, was finally named Eli's 18th president,* his academic well-wishers leapt to the *New York Times* op-ed page to warn him that (a) he would have to achieve distance from his former faculty colleagues, thrive on bureaucratic pressure, and do time at the Washington front; and (b) that he would inherit a Yale faculty "near the end of its patience," chomping "to reclaim the authority and power it has lost, and regain its deserved share in the university budget."

Elite universities help to shape their times and are shaped

*Harvard's Dean Henry Rosovsky had turned down the job because, he said in effect, he wanted to continue to be involved in education.

by them. If they wish to contribute intelligence and leadership to America's third century as they did, at their best, to its first and second, their success will depend in large measure on their power to address the ways this brave new world differs from the more comfortable one just left behind. The greatest challenge facing elite universities today is not providing the nation's luckiest, brightest, most ambitious teen-agers with even more advantages; it is not pushing already breathtaking research even further into the ionosphere, or shaping public policy and taste even more effectively. It is not even sheer survival (so far). The greatest challenge is to help all of higher education reinvent its mission in the face of the largest, most diverse, and academically least-prepared college-going population in American history.

For a few public elite institutions, this new heterogeneous student body may require a radical transformation of purpose. A recent survey of "America's intellectual elite" found that more than one-third of them had (a generation or two ago) attended four colleges: Harvard, City College of New York, Yale, and Columbia, in that order. Not long ago the City University of New York disclosed that its single biggest remedial (reading and writing) program in 1976 was conducted at City College. As the *Times* reported, 37 percent of 14,500 undergraduates were "taking remedial classes at what used to be called the 'proletarian Harvard.'" Where CCNY requires money and vision to adapt to its new tasks, enlightened liberals instead extend their sympathy, and privately scratch City College off the approved list.

But most elite institutions will not have to endure the agony of losing their Michelin stars. For them, the challenge is to help all of higher education learn to serve the other 97 percent of American students without snobbism, condescension, or despair. One victory the elite institutions have largely achieved in our status-conscious society, alas, is convincing many of the students, faculty, and administrators of some 3,000 colleges and universities that their work is at best second-rate, faddish, essentially remedial, and often hopeless. With the lecture rooms and student aid for mass American higher education now in place, a new mission for that challenging enterprise needs to be born—though whether it will come out of Stanford, Chicago, and Cambridge, Mass., is far from clear.



THE LATEST WAVE: COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by Larry Van Dyne

Community colleges, which now enroll about one-third of the country's 11 million undergraduates, crowd the very bottom of higher education's pecking order. Ranking below even the least prestigious of the four-year colleges and universities, these two-year schools struggle along without the assets that make for high intellectual status.

First of all, they are completely nonexclusive, admitting virtually anyone who walks through their doors. Their students usually have average academic preparation—or less. Their instructors, few of whom have Ph.D.'s, exist on the margins of the prestige-conscious professoriat. And they offer remedial and vocational courses that prepare graduates for modest jobs in business, industry, and paraprofessional occupations.

In short, community colleges are places where many upwardly mobile parents hope their children will not have to go.

Yet this plebian status also gives these same community colleges a certain cachet, at least in some liberal circles. They are often portrayed as the true vehicles of "equal opportunity." They are the "open-door" colleges, offering poor whites, blacks, Hispanics, and others a first chance to move up, to share in the American dream. About 1,000 of these publicly financed commuter colleges have been sprinkled throughout our inner cities, suburbs, and county seats over the last 20 years—more or less in the name of open access. Now, as they begin to reach maturity, it is time to ask how closely their performance matches their rhetoric.

The origins of the contemporary community college can be traced to the turn of the century. William Rainey Harper, first president of the University of Chicago, was one of the earliest to promote the idea of separate "junior colleges" that would offer two years of college education and allow the big universities to concentrate on more advanced work. More important, however, was the movement toward free public high schools, a national development beginning in the late 19th century that some

communities pushed to its logical extension by creating local junior colleges to offer a 13th and 14th year. California's first junior college, for instance, was an outgrowth of the Fresno high school in 1911. From such beginnings, the community-college movement expanded—but only a little, remaining a minor part of the country's educational system until the early 1960s.

In that decade, the community colleges took off. It was a golden era at nearly every level of higher education.* Most trends pointed upward—enrollments, payrolls, state appropriations, federal research money, new construction, salary levels, consulting fees, even professorial prestige. Seven states—California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Texas, and Washington—quickly jumped into the forefront of community-college expansion. By 1968 these states accounted for one-third of all community-college campuses and two-thirds of all two-year-college students.

Other states were not far behind. Their educators saw the community college as an ideal device for meeting the mushrooming demand for higher learning. It was far cheaper, certainly, than the creation *ex nihilo* of new four-year colleges and universities. The existing schools, already overcrowded, often encouraged this movement: The new community colleges would absorb those students the established public universities did not want.

Community colleges thus acquired enormous support in the 1960s, exemplified by the frequent boast of their boosters that a new one was opening somewhere in the country every fortnight. Community-college enrollments grew from 600,000 in 1960 to more than 2 million in 1970. By 1976, the figure had jumped to 4.1 million. California alone now has over 100 of the nation's 1,000 community-college campuses.

It was during the 1960s boom that administrators and teachers at the community colleges began to think of themselves as a special "movement," as keepers of an egalitarian ideology

*Only Catholic women's colleges and private two-year colleges did not experience dramatic increases in enrollment.

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at a time when the civil-rights movement was pushing the politicians and the courts toward a broad redefinition of equal educational opportunity.

The community colleges, it was said, were far better suited than four-year schools to provide such opportunity. As demand grew, traditional colleges were raising their admissions standards. Their tuitions were creeping higher. Many had always been outside the cities and thus were geographically inconvenient. The community colleges, by contrast, had few admissions standards. They kept tuition low or eliminated it altogether. (The national average even now is only \$387 per year, compared to \$621 per year plus room and board at public four-year colleges, and \$2,330 plus room and board at private four-year colleges.) And the community colleges were within reach of their students' homes.

A Second Chance

In addition to their emphasis on equal opportunity, the two-year colleges played up their localism—which is why they began changing their names during the 1960s from “junior” to “community” colleges.* A two-year college, its proponents argued, could contribute to a community's welfare in many important ways—supplying trained labor for new industry, turning out practical nurses for county hospitals, bringing occasional bits of culture to the community, or whatever else seemed appropriate. Chambers of commerce and local legislators were impressed; they came to regard establishment of a community college as a mark of civic progress, as important as an airport or an industrial park. Even the names of these schools have a ring of localism: Henry Ford, Wilbur Wright, and Carl Sandburg all have two-year schools named after them, as do Carl Albert, Richard J. Daley, and George Wallace.

An open-door admissions policy has brought an astonishingly diverse student body, not just the poor, into the community colleges. (They are missing only the most affluent of students.) Some of these are “traditional students”—middle-class youths in their late teens, directly out of high school, with average ability, who are studying full-time and will eventually move on to a job or transfer to a four-year school. To these students, the community college is a convenient way to satisfy parents'

* While four-year colleges get virtually all their tax subsidies from federal and state governments, community colleges get about 23 percent from local taxes. The states put in about 44 percent, 15 percent comes from tuition, and federal contributions are only about 2 percent.

pressure for college. It is near home, and it is an inexpensive way to sample a variety of subjects and possible career choices. Above all, it offers a second chance for those who drifted through high school.

“Cooling Out”

The community colleges also attract large numbers of so-called nontraditional students. Here are the housewives preparing for a return to the job market at middle age; senior citizens learning all those things neglected or postponed during their working lives; blue-collar workers trying to improve their chances for promotion or to move into entirely new careers; recent high-school graduates whose academic skills are too meager for them to get into college anywhere else; highly motivated Vietnam veterans. Since the 1960s, these students have changed the complexion of the community colleges: More than half of all two-year-college students are studying part-time; their average age is now about 30.

The diversity of community college students is mirrored in the endless variety of courses and programs these schools offer. Most of their full-time students are either in “transfer” tracks (which parallel the offerings of the lower divisions of four-year colleges) or in occupational programs (to prepare them for mid- or low-level jobs in health care, engineering, computers, and scores of other fields). Historically, the transfer track has accounted for about two-thirds of the enrollment in a typical community college, but that proportion has been declining in favor of occupational training as the job market tightens in the 1970s. (Ironically, the leveling off and projected decline of enrollments in four-year colleges has prompted some of these traditional institutions to offer occupational training, which they once disdained as fit only for two-year colleges.)

Two other types of specialized courses are also common on the community-college menu. “Community-service” programs—education lingo for such courses as macramé, dieting, and how to quit smoking—attract large numbers of part-time, noncredit students. And many other enrollees, often those hampered by past disadvantages, spend at least some of their time in “developmental” programs—a nice euphemism for remedial training intended to help bring their English, math, and other basic skills up to par.

All this describes the community colleges accurately. Yet it does not go far enough. Almost hidden from view is what may well be their most important social function: sorting people.

REMEDIAL EDUCATION: A GROWTH INDUSTRY

Only five years ago, the need for "remedial" undergraduate education was the elite universities' dirty secret. Rare were the school administrators who admitted that they had students with deficiencies in such basic skills as reading, writing, and math. And those who did usually argued that the problem was nothing a year of "bonehead" math and a copy of *The Elements of Style* wouldn't solve. But as Scholastic Aptitude Test scores continued to decline—and professors continued to complain—such colleges were forced to take action. Remedial courses were no longer confined to community colleges and underprepared minority students.

Today, few universities lack a compensatory reading and writing program, not to mention a "math anxiety" clinic. Swarthmore's English 1A—reading and composition—now enrolls 10 percent of the freshman class. Wellesley and Wesleyan conduct a joint math project for the poorly prepared, and Cornell's six-week writing workshop hones the skills of 100 students every summer—many of them already in graduate school. Some 20 percent of Berkeley's freshmen enroll in no-credit reading and writing tutorials; at Stanford, half the freshman class routinely signs up at the "Learning Assistance Center." The story is the same across the country.

University deans are divided on the causes of the 1970s decline in basic skills (they blame everything from television to lazy high-school teachers). But few are oblivious to the situation's little ironies. The most obvious: Universities such as Brown, Yale, Princeton, and Columbia have looked to the community colleges for guidance in setting up their remedial programs.

Intentionally or not, they are one of the higher education system's main devices for picking early winners and losers in the great American chase after higher income and social status.

One aspect of this sorting function has been dubbed "cooling out." This is an old function that used to be performed at many state universities, where high-school graduates were admitted in droves, huge numbers flunked out quickly, and many more shifted from liberal arts colleges into the less demanding schools of education or agriculture. The community colleges now do the same thing. They convince students with excessively high expectations of education or career to settle for something less. Young people who want to be engineers are convinced they are better off as *aides* to engineers; computer scientists *manqué* absorb instead the routine techniques of programming.

It is revealing that two-thirds of community college students enter the transfer track aimed toward four-year colleges,

but only *half* of them actually stay in this track. The others find easier paths. Some move into occupational programs; a few are simply cooled-out altogether—students for whom the “open” door becomes a “revolving” one that deposits them back where they started.

In the view of such educators as Burton Clark and Jerome Karabel, the community colleges also serve, in effect, as a kind of moat designed to protect the universities higher up the line from underprepared students. The most explicit expression of this idea has occurred in California. In the early 1960s, when popular demand for mass higher education was soaring, California set up a rigid, three-tiered system of public colleges with different admissions standards for each level. Students ranking in the upper one-eighth of their high-school classes are allowed into branches of the University of California, including prestigious Berkeley. Those in the upper one-third to one-eighth go to four-year state colleges—Long Beach State, for instance, or San Diego State. Everyone else has to be content with a community college.

The California system, which is employed to varying degrees in other states, is defended as “meritocratic” because a student’s academic ability alone determines his place in the educational structure. The trouble is that the system ends up reflecting—and perpetuating—existing social-class arrangements. The upper-tier campuses tend to get more students from affluent families; the middle tier gets the somewhat less affluent; and the bottom tier gets the least affluent. Across the country, only one-fourth of the freshmen entering major universities in 1977 came from families earning less than \$15,000 annually, but almost half of the community-college freshmen came from such circumstances.

Unanswered Questions

The racial makeup of inner-city community colleges provides another illustration of how faithfully these institutions reflect the local patterns. The three-campus, 28,000-student Cuyahoga Community College district in Cleveland, for example, has a downtown campus that is 65 percent black and two suburban campuses that are 80 percent white. (The same arrangement applies in Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Los Angeles, Newark, New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis.) This situation has prompted one writer to wonder if these colleges are becoming “the slums of higher education.”

Community-college administrators respond by citing their

institutions' mandate to serve the community. Should they be held accountable for local segregated housing patterns? Moreover, the evidence in Cleveland reveals little variation in educational quality between the inner-city and suburban campuses.

Critics note, however, that housing patterns were not a sufficient legal justification to maintain segregated public elementary and secondary school systems. They add that blacks and other minorities are in "disproportionate representation" in community colleges nationally, accounting for 20 percent of enrollments, compared to only 14 percent in four-year schools. And the NAACP, which brought suit three years ago to end de facto segregation in Cleveland's lower schools, is considering bringing suit against the city's community colleges. They have the precedent of a 1972 Memphis ruling to back them up.

Many basic questions about how well community colleges serve their students remain unanswered, partly because they are relatively new institutions and partly because of the primitive state of educational analysis. The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, which in 1973 ended a massive five-year, 100-volume study of higher education, raised a number of questions that it could not answer: Amid the welter of different courses, how many community-college students are essentially enrolled in "terminal" occupational programs, and how many are really heading toward four-year schools? What happens to the many students derailed off the transfer track? How do community-college students fare in the job market compared to people who only graduate from high school, or those who complete four-year degrees? How good are the remedial programs?

We still do not know. Even assuming favorable answers, the community colleges ultimately raise a philosophical question: Can a system of higher education that is so hierarchical and that consigns two-year students to the lowest status ever hope to be fair to all? Probably not. But, for all their faults, the community colleges, the latest wave in American education, *do* represent a considerable advance over the prewar days when higher education of any sort reached only the fortunate few.



A MATTER OF MONEY

by Chester E. Finn, Jr.

Everyone is familiar with certain claims made for American higher education: It is the largest and most equitable system in the world; its research and scholarship are unsurpassed; it is the engine driving the American Dream Machine. And indeed, it is all these things. It is one of our national glories.

At the same time, however, it is expensive—and getting more so. Long nurtured through the munificence of state and federal governments, private philanthropy, and grateful alumni, colleges and universities are beginning to find that these resources have limits.

The nation's colleges and universities had combined incomes of almost \$40 billion in the 1975–76 academic year, up from about \$13 billion a decade earlier. (College and university enrollments almost doubled during the same period, climbing from 5.9 million to 11.1 million students.) When the “foregone income” of college students is added in, according to economist Howard Bowen, the grand total of all “costs of college” was actually around \$85 billion—almost as much as we pay for national defense.

Curiously, while Americans muster these vast sums year after year, they pay little heed to a fundamental, underlying question: Who *should* pay for higher education? That is, is it a public or a private good? Should it be financed primarily by the entire populace via the tax system, or by students and their families via tuition?

We are far closer to an answer with respect to elementary and secondary education, where the public schools are universal, wholly supported through tax revenues, and therefore “free.” Private schools remain an option; but if they were suddenly to disappear, the American commitment to free public elementary and secondary education would remain. Over the past century it has become an established right.

Not so higher education, where financing is mired in a swamp of unresolved disputes and half-perceived responsibilities. Unlike the situation in France, say, where a centralized Ministry of Education dictates national policy on everything from admissions to curriculum, in America the creation, gov-

ernance, and financing of colleges and universities remains where the Tenth Amendment left it: in state and private hands. Each state operates its own network of public colleges and universities. In some states, admission to many of these institutions is selective, not universal. In most jurisdictions, the student must pay part of his tuition costs, not to mention room and board.

Besides state schools, there are, of course, the private campuses supported primarily by tuition, philanthropy, and miscellaneous federal grants and contracts. Because they receive little, if any, state money, it now costs a student an average of \$2,000 more per year to attend a private college (\$5,110) than to attend its public counterpart (\$3,000).

The federal government has never assumed *any* overall responsibility for education per se, nor for the support of schools and colleges as institutions. Yet today Washington directs billions of dollars into the higher education enterprise through hundreds of program or agency channels, many of them roundabout and some of them fairly well concealed. Though the portion of university budgets supplied directly by Washington has eroded in recent years, in fiscal 1978 the federal government nevertheless pumped about \$14.3 billion into activities related to higher education (including scientific research).

The principal means of federal support (more than half the total) for higher education is student aid, which generally flows from Washington to individual recipients. It is snagged by colleges and universities only to the degree that they manage to enroll federally aided students. (This is a far cry from the direct "institutional aid" for which the schools have long been clamoring.) Federal help to students comes in protean forms—grants, loans, subsidized jobs. With rare exceptions, these programs have one of three purposes: assistance for needy or otherwise "disadvantaged" students; aid to those pursuing certain careers (such as nursing) or academic specialties (such as specific foreign languages); and stipends for persons who fall into other categories of government responsibility (ex-GIs, for example).

A second, more direct source of federal support for higher education is actual payments to colleges and universities—about \$4.7 billion in 1978, most of it earmarked for particular programs, studies, and research projects that may be ancillary to student instruction. Sixty percent of these direct payments pay for scientific research and development, which is heavily concentrated in relatively few institutions.*

*Of the nation's 3,000 colleges and universities, only one in five received *any* R & D money from Washington in 1975. The top 100 accounted for 85 percent of the total, ranging from \$5.4 million at Florida State to \$68.7 million at M.I.T.

A third significant (though less visible) source of federal funds consists of "tax expenditures"—money that individuals can keep and use for higher education because the Internal Revenue Service, honoring various exemptions, does not collect it. There are deductions for charitable contributions to higher education, for example. Scholarships and fellowships are not taxable. Most parents may take a tax deduction for children in college.* These and other provisions will account for roughly \$2.1 billion in uncollected federal revenues in 1978.

What matters most in bringing federal money into campus coffers is what *kind* of college it happens to be. A school can increase its dollar yield from Washington by deliberately changing certain of its own features and practices. Some changes (such as admitting more federally aided students) are easier to make than others (such as adding a medical school to a small liberal arts college). But all such maneuvers—and most universities have high-powered "development" officers to think them up—carry the risk of allowing the autonomy of the academic community to be compromised by the regulations that seem to be attached to every federal dollar.

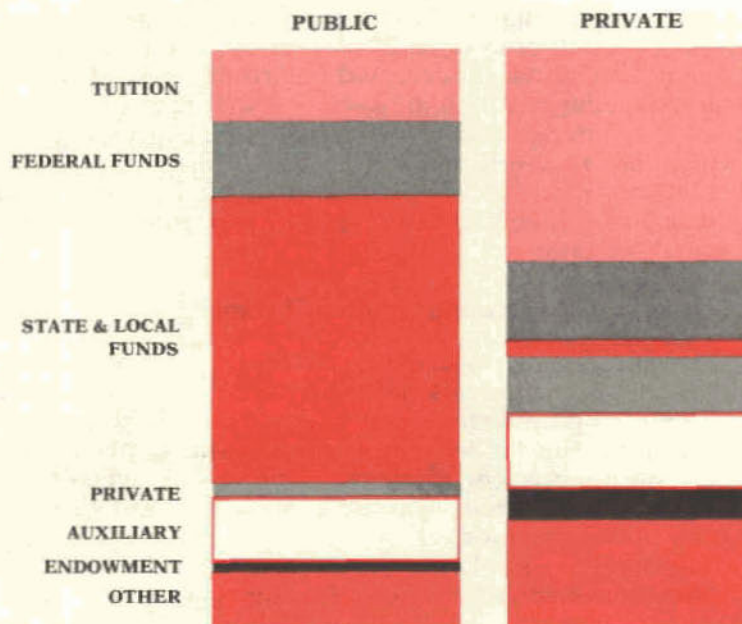
It is not surprising—and it may often be socially beneficial—that universities are willing to take such chances. Virtually every one of the programs funneling cash into the colleges was designed by Congress to accomplish a specific national purpose such as equal opportunity, vocational training, or scientific research. The money thus serves as a lure. Former Yale President Kingman Brewster has called this practice the "now that I have bought the button, I have a right to design the coat" approach by Washington to its own largesse. Perhaps more accurate is the Senegalese saying that a man with his hand in your pocket must move with you. So long as higher education remains an instrument rather than an object of federal policy,

*In June 1978 the House of Representatives passed a bill to provide a new tax credit for college (and private school) tuitions. Its fate at this writing is uncertain.

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SOURCES OF REVENUE FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Sources of income vary greatly for public and private schools. Overall, the percentage of revenues obtained from tuition, endowment, and state governments has increased since the early 1970's; the federal share has declined. Costs include pay for 1 million "professional" employees, up from 700,000 in 1967. Teachers' median 1976 salary: \$16,313.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics. 1976 data.

Washington will continue to demand a payback of some sort from institutions that seek its money. Often, this payback comes in the form of decreased "sovereignty." It is illuminating to watch erstwhile "statist" academics suddenly discover that Jefferson may have been right after all about the limits of government. "The published *mea culpas* of prominent liberals," Stanford University Vice President Robert Rosenzweig recently observed, "have developed into a tidy cottage industry."

The states have a completely different role in financing higher education. They are more concerned with education per se, and they also make a sharper distinction between public and private institutions, providing very little support for the latter. For their public colleges and universities, however, the states

provide sizable subsidies. Together with local governments (which ordinarily help foot the bills for community colleges), they supply, on average, half the total current revenues of these campuses. In the past decade, higher education's share of total annual state budgets has risen by an average of 85 percent.*

State governments almost always cut up the educational pie on the basis of the number of students the public colleges enroll. But now that the number of college-aged youths is declining—it will drop some 25 percent by 1990 before it picks up again—the system has created unfortunate incentives. It is already impelling rival public campuses to compete fiercely for students; to lure applicants away from more expensive private institutions; to duplicate the academic offerings of other schools; and to downplay—even scuttle—whole programs and departments that lack “student appeal,” regardless of their intellectual importance.

The Implications of Decline

The enrollment imperative also forces administrators of public colleges and universities to keep tuitions as low as possible, usually by pushing the state's per-student subsidy as high as possible. It also means being less than enthusiastic about proposals to steer more federal money into private schools. This public-private internecine warfare is one of the most visible imbroglios in academia today.

The implications of declining enrollments for the financing of higher education are profound. There is no reason to suppose that society will agree to consign a mounting percentage of its wealth to an enterprise serving a dwindling percentage of its people. Indeed, economist David W. Breneman predicts that outlays for higher education, which accounted for 3.4 percent of the federal budget in 1976, will slip to 2.4 percent by 1983.

This “retrenchment”—as academics persist in calling it—will have diverse consequences. Some economically shaky institutions are likely to go under. But it would be a mistake to gauge the health of higher education by noting whether every college in existence in 1978 is still a going concern in 1990. As with any dynamic industry, higher education is marked by bold starts and occasional tragic endings. But it is significant that the number of colleges and universities still continues to rise, if at a slower pace than during the giddy 1960s, when a new college or

*The several states differ markedly in their generosity. In 1973–74, state and local outlays per full-time student in public colleges and universities ranged from \$871 in Oklahoma to \$3,087 in Alaska.

university was opened about once a week. Even the beleaguered private sector, after a slight dip in the early 1970s, has resumed its upward climb in numbers.

Some new campuses are unconventional institutions—such as the “proprietary” or profit-making trade schools—that look more like industrial parks than like the stereotypical liberal arts college with ivy-covered Georgian buildings. Yet as the liberal arts baccalaureate brings dwindling economic rewards—the inexorable result of our success in awarding it to so many more people—it will not be surprising if more and more students seek educational experiences of a different order, be it job-oriented training or, as David Riesman observes, the spiritual succor of fundamentalist theology.

Insofar as it turns to government for relief, higher education will probably be disappointed. State legislators show scant inclination to change their historic pattern of support for public but not private campuses. As for Washington, there seems little prospect of unrestricted “institutional aid.” Federal research programs and other forms of “categorical” funding will continue and probably grow. But they do little to support the central academic activities of colleges and universities.

These are familiar concerns that now appear more alarming because higher education no longer enjoys (as it once did) the full support of national economic growth and prosperity. Still, there is no need for gloom or despair. For all its rigidities and idiosyncracies, the American higher education system is surprisingly resilient. Despite the frequent jeremiads issued by campus publicists, the crises of the past 200 years have always faded away; and the system as a whole has emerged stronger from each new storm. Analysts looking back two decades hence may well wonder what all the fuss was about.



BACKGROUND BOOKS

THE CHANGING AMERICAN CAMPUS

In the beginning there was Harvard College, established in Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636 "when the little community perched on the edge of a howling wilderness hardly numbered 10,000." The colonists gave thanks to Providence for inspiring the vision of "one Mr. Harvard." But as Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith make clear in **American Higher Education: A Documentary History** (2 vols., Chicago, 1961, cloth; 1968, paper), the urge to found "a place for the exercise of Learning" has also had considerable secular appeal throughout American history.

Statesmen like Jefferson, shrewd investors like Ezra Cornell, acerbic critics like Thorstein Veblen—all helped shape U.S. higher education as the small, quasi-religious colonial enterprises led to private liberal arts colleges, big land-grant universities, and, by the early 20th century, first-rate research universities rivaling their European models.

From the start, campus debate has been vigorous—over academic freedom, admissions policy, the curriculum, research. Should Harvard tolerate heretics (Cotton Mather, 1702)? Are the classics an anachronism (*The Yale Report*, 1828)? Must the university deal with populist as well as aristocratic tastes (Ezra Cornell, 1865)?

In Laurence Veysey's view (**The Emergence of the American University**, Chicago, 1965, cloth; 1970, paper), the genius of the American university as a species may be that it has never really drawn the line. Elitism? By 1900, universities were essentially open to all, even though

"all" usually meant "children of northern European extraction whose fathers did not work with their hands." Quality? On a cushion of growing enrollment, advanced scientific and scholarly work prospered—even if most university administrators in the 1890s favored the collegiate, not the scholarly, ideal.

The full-fledged university is a relative latecomer in America. The best general histories of the broader academic enterprise—covering the whole spectrum of institutions, their changing curricula, students, purposes—include Frederick Rudolph's **The American College and University** (Knopf, 1962, cloth; Random, 1965, paper) and the more up-to-date **Higher Education in Transition, 1636-1976** by John S. Brubacher and Willis Rudy (Harper, 1958; rev. 1976). Both surveys boast excellent bibliographies.

The diversity of the modern American post-secondary school system is partly a result of the Supreme Court's decision in the famous Dartmouth College Case of 1819, which, in effect, legalized the private sector in higher education. Elaine Kendall's **Peculiar Institutions** (Putnam's, 1976) looks at one group of private schools, the Northeast's Seven Sisters. Starting with Mary Lyon's founding of Mount Holyoke Seminary in 1837, Kendall traces the lives of a handful of brewers, spinsters, and assorted eccentrics who by bequest or other expressions of will power helped make women's education "an alarming success."

The end of a very different "peculiar institution"—slavery—spawned

the black colleges; the basic text here is Dwight O. W. Holmes's **The Evolution of the Negro College** (Teachers College, 1934; Arno, 1969). A more critical treatment is former U.S. Commissioner of Education Earl McGrath's **The Predominantly Negro Colleges and Universities in Transition** (Teachers College, 1965, paper). Writing before the influx of minorities into "mainstream" institutions, McGrath found that, on average, the poorly endowed black colleges had failed to keep pace, in terms of facilities, faculty, and academic standards, with comparable predominantly white institutions.

Philanthropy and the federal government have since helped stabilize the black schools; they are probably stronger than ever before. Yet most black college-goers now do not attend predominantly black colleges—a result of the civil-rights struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. One of the most concise overviews of "affirmative action" and minority enrollment is **Selective Admissions in Higher Education**, a report from the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies (Jossey-Bass, 1978, paper). The report endorses the consideration of race in college admissions; a statistical appendix buttresses the text. Sociologist Nathan Glazer supplies a contrary view in **Affirmative Discrimination** (Basic Books, 1975, cloth; 1978, paper), contending that the new "group consciousness" of the law threatens to erode the rights of individuals.

What do other professors say? According to a survey of 60,000 faculty members by Everett Carl Ladd, Jr. and Seymour Martin Lipset (**The**

Divided Academy, Norton, 1976, paper), preferential treatment of minorities and women has "sharply divided academe." At the same time, the professoriat retains a generally "liberal orientation."

Educators produce a sizable flow of more or less "philosophical" literature: distinguished lectures, occasional manifestos, reasoned "white papers." Often cited is John Henry Cardinal Newman's **The Idea of a University** (London, 1873; Oxford, 1976), portions of which were first published in 1852, which defined liberal education as an effort "to fit a man of the world for the world." Also cited is Alfred North Whitehead's crusade against "dead knowledge" and "inert ideas" in **The Aims of Education** (Macmillan, 1929; Free Press, 1967, paper). Three other little classics: the influential Harvard "red book" (**General Education in a Free Society**, Harvard, 1945); former University of Chicago President Robert Hutchins's **The Higher Learning in America** (Yale, 1936; 1962, paper); and Carnegie Council Chairman Clark Kerr's **The Uses of the University** (Harvard, 1963; rev. 1972). All three deal with the aims of "general education": how, as Hutchins defined the task, to "educate the student for intelligent action."

Unfortunately overlooked by many academic writers, we might add, is **The Elements of Style** by William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White (2nd ed., Macmillan, 1972, paper). The precepts of "the little book" ("Use the active voice," "Be obscure clearly") have much to offer both to the general reader and to the scholar's world of publish or perish.

EDITOR'S NOTE. *Help in choosing some of these titles came from Larry Van Dyne and Edward T. Weidlein, both on the staff of The Chronicle of Higher Education.*