

## SPECIAL FEATURES / CONTRIBUTIONS SPÉCIALES

# Strategic Planning and Management for Change\*

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### Introduction

My task is to share with you some reflections on the twin themes of "strategic planning" and "management for change." With respect to the first topic, my Oxford dictionary, to which I frequently resort in moments of linguistic confusion, tells me that "strategy" is the art of the commander-in-chief of an army. However, the purpose of this paper is not to talk about military matters. The fact is that terms such as "strategy" or "strategic planning" are being applied in a bewildering variety of contexts. The denotation of such terms has become so broad that their connotation or meaning threatens to vanish. If you do not care for such philosophical jargon, just consider what happens when you spread jam on your toast: the farther you spread it the thinner it gets. So with spreading a term too far, it becomes thin and un nourishing.

These days we talk not only of strategic planning for national defence, of strategies for government financing, or for university management and planning; we hear also of strategies for playing the stock market, for improving your game of golf, for more productive gambling at the casino, and so forth. Not long ago, as a charming young lady was leaving town to take part in some national beauty contest, the interviewer at the airport asked her: "And just what will your strategy be in the modelling contest?" "My strategy is just to be my natural self," was the reply – and probably a very good one at that.

### Definition of Terms

When a term is applied in such a loose and indiscriminate manner, we cannot engage in any useful discussion unless we can become quite specific about the working definition we shall use. As applied to universities, it turns out that there is a fair degree of consensus among several leading practitioners of institutional research in the United States.

Robert G. Cope, for example, in an influential essay draws a series of contrasts between "conventional long range planning" and "strategic planning." The first,

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he contends, looks inward, the second, outward. One regards systems as closed; the other sees them as open. Where conventional planning attempts to be scientific, strategic planning falls rather into the category of an art. Conventional planning aims at a blueprint, while strategic planning is content with a process. The new style planner (among other things) must develop the skills of "environmental scanning," construct "probability diffusion matrices," estimate "value-system changes," and engage in several other recommended techniques by which to guide planning (Cope, 1981).

Marvin W. Peterson considers that strategic planning encompasses four broad elements, which he sets forth as follows:

- (1) environment assessment or scanning (to identify trends or potential changes in the environment and their implications for the institution)
- (2) institutional assessment (to clarify strengths, weaknesses, problems and capabilities of the institution)
- (3) values assessment (to consider values, aspirations, and ideals of various constituencies and responsibilities of the institution to them and the larger public)
- (4) master plan creation (to devise a strategic pattern, design, or direction for the institution on the basis of the first three elements (Peterson, 1980).

When we turn to discussion of British universities, we can find a somewhat similar account. In the *Report of the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities*, established to investigate operations in the universities of the United Kingdom, and chaired by Sir Alex Jarratt, the following definition of "strategic planning" occurs:

"We understand strategic planning to involve the setting of objectives for the university as a whole and its constituent parts, which take account of relevant long term trends; and the preparation of plans, with stated priorities and options for achieving the objectives. It calls for the means of making the changes in content and pace that will be necessary as the plans evolve and circumstances change. Strategic planning usually has to be done in conditions of uncertainty. Such concepts may be unrecognizable in universities. They are, however, processes which other organizations have to operate in order to survive" (1985).

For present purposes I have decided to follow the extensive account provided by Dr. George Keller, in his lucid, stimulating and widely influential study, *Academic Strategy* (Keller, 1983). I believe that without falling into undue simplification, what Keller has to say may be summarized under five main headings, corresponding to five main themes in his version of strategic planning.

### **The Major Themes of "Strategic Planning"**

- (1) The first theme is that colleges and universities are now faced with the need to *compete*. The environment has "turned from solicitous and supportive to

ensorious and cold-blooded. Higher education faces scarcity; and “it is scarcity that draws out competition and combativeness” (p. 146). The “specter of decline and bankruptcy” is haunting higher education (p. 3). “Experts predict that between 10 percent and 30 percent of America’s 3,100 colleges and universities will close their doors or merge with other institutions by 1995” (p. 3). The environment contains opportunities but also holds threats. Student numbers are due to decline and major crises in finances will result. Faculty raiding will intensify (p. 18). Traditional institutions of higher learning are facing massive and formidable competition from “noncollege and nonuniversity higher education” (p. 18). In this context, strategic planning must concentrate above everything else on the fate of the institution, on its very survival (p. 150). Its fundamental aim “is a Darwinian one of linking the forward direction of your organization with the movement of historical forces in the environment” (p. 152). Given this overriding need to compete, “to have a strategy is to put your own intelligence, foresight and will in charge instead of outside forces and disordered concerns.” In short, you will need a *strategos* or a general, who had better possess the real arts of generalship, if you are to ensure that your organization will make it through the next decade.

(2) If we are to emulate the successful *strategos*, we shall certainly have to “scan the environment.” This second theme occurs as well in other accounts of strategic planning. As Keller notes, various techniques are being employed here – as yet perhaps crude and imperfect, but nonetheless essential for the development of a strategy. In the words of Richard Cyert, “strategic planning is an attempt to give organizations antennae to sense the changing environment” (Keller, 1983, p.vii). Forecasting will by no means eliminate all risks, but it is imperative to have some means of forecasting: (i) technological change and its implications; (ii) the future of the economy; (iii) demographic trends; (iv) politico-legal developments; and (v) sociocultural changes.

(3) Thirdly, our institutions must assess themselves, in a far more rigorous manner than they have ever done previously. Like other corporate entities, they do have to ask themselves the question: “What business are we really in?” “What special role do we play?” “What comparative advantages do we have over approximately similar places?” “What should our college aspire to be ten years from now?” (p. 121). What are our traditions, values and aspirations? For some institutions, these may be encapsulated in an “organizational saga,” but it is unwise to rest upon that sense of tradition if the world outside has in the course of history radically changed (Clark, 1972; Kirschling and Huckfeldt, 1980). We must ask: What are our strengths and our weaknesses? and how do we capitalize upon our strengths? To compete effectively, each institution must find its own “market niche.” It must place itself in a distinctive position, and forge its own identity by differentiating itself from others in its competitive league.

(4) The fourth theme is that of *quality*. “Academic quality will be an especially huge concern in the next decade or two .... Quality throughout a college’s

operations is therefore a condition of survival and a must for academic management" (p. 133). The entire institution must be permeated, in every facet of its activities, by this drive for quality. No departments can be allowed to remain known weak spots (p. 134). Quality cannot be imposed; it must be elicited. "Lack of quality, however, should be strongly and surgically dealt with" (p. 134). "Nothing corrodes as much as the tendency in some universities to carry their incompetents" (p. 134).

In this connection, Keller notes the importance which some analysts place on the institution's contribution to the student's intellectual and personal development. He refers with approval (p. 132) to the recommendation of Alexander Astin (Astin, 1981, p. 162). In the words of Alexander Astin: "With enrolments going down and costs up in the 1980's, I would invest in absolutely first-rate undergraduate learning. I would concentrate on excellent student services, superb teaching, and rigorous studies, so that my college had a great number of highly satisfied customers, and a steady stream of superbly trained young people" (p. 132). Nor can research be neglected. We must know where the frontiers of research will be, and find strategically appropriate ways of participating. Often this will occur in forging new links, contractual and educational, with business and industry.

Quality and vigour of *faculty* is of the utmost importance. "For any institution that wishes to increase its quality of instruction and research, the continuing rejuvenation of its faculty in the period ahead is supremely urgent" (p. 23). Quality-seeking institutions are "moving swiftly from across-the-board pay increases to raises based on merit" (p. 23). In some fields, competition for superior faculty is such that "higher education is racing toward a two-tier faculty salary scale" (p. 23).

(5) Fifthly, forms of university governance and management stand in need of radical reform. Institutions that wish to flourish or perhaps even survive can no longer be content to remain (in the words of Cohen and March) "organized anarchies," practicing what they term the "garbage can model" of decision-making (Cohen and March, 1974). What is required is a more active, change-oriented management style. The era of laissez-faire administration is over and "the era of academic strategy has begun" (p. 26). There must be "a more sharply defined sense of how U.S. academic institutions should be governed, managed and led" (p. 27). New forms of governance and decision-making are being invented to address this problem.

The burden of changing to this more active and *dirigiste* style will usually fall on the president of the institution. Faculty collegialism, however, which typically creates a stand-off between presidents and their faculties is a major impediment to change. There is, Keller asserts, "a basic myth" among faculty that each "college or university is close to an Athenian democracy of professional scholars who know each other and share a bundle of values and aspirations, which they practice in their institutional lives" (p. 30). According to the myth:

"This college of learned men and women decides in an orderly and mostly rational way on all matters pertaining to the academic life of their institution, constantly updating the curriculum, departmental structures, and priorities for academic investment to accord with the latest scientific, intellectual and artistic advances. It also polices and renounces its own weakest sectors. It is, and forever should be, a free society, one unburdened by political interference, business practices, or worries about market conditions, finances and competitive forces, so that the scholarly collective can point the way to ever higher levels of reasonableness and civilized life for all of us" (p. 30).

True, "this snug little republic of scholars" may admit, somewhat grudgingly, that it needs "a few caretaker-administrators" to carry out some of the essential chores. But they must not be allowed to intrude on academic priorities and decisions about personnel. "In the ideal academic commune," according to this collegial myth, "there is no need for any administrative authority" (p. 30).

In contrast with this myth, Keller sees "an acute need to restore clear authority in some fresh form to American higher education" (p. 36). There must be "a reassertion of institutional values and needs over the academic profession's own values and expectations" (p. 23). Participation and consultation will be essential, and academic expertise obviously cannot be ignored; but in the last analysis the president (or some other very senior leader) must shoulder the responsibility for the final decision. Keller apparently does not believe that higher education is currently over-endowed with a supply of vigorous and far-sighted leaders: most presidents and chancellors, in his opinion, are "cautious, unassertive" and "Hamlet-like" (p. 56). The chief "impellers to change" will rather be the shocks induced by financial crisis or strong pressures from the outside. By some combination of forces, however, governance must be reformed and the role of leadership – which he defines (p. 67) as "the shrewd shaping of the mix and nature of the organization's activities" – adequately filled.

It may be that some change is already underway. Keller does remark that "the old faculty senates are now ragged, poorly attended oratorical bodies in most cases" (p. 127) and that the balance of power is shifting towards the president (p. 127). Other commentators are perhaps less sanguine: for example, Clark Kerr and the Commission on Strengthening Presidential Leadership (1984).<sup>1</sup>

### **System Impediments to Strategic Planning**

From the above, it is plain that Keller offers an account of "strategic planning" which is highly entrepreneurial and dynamic in character, and which emphasizes competition, differentiation, adaptability and above all the drive to quality as its distinguishing features. How far is such strategic planning alive and well in our universities? My short answer is that if we were to picture a spectrum with zero degrees of "strategic planning" at one end and Keller's version of it at the other, most of our institutions would not be at zero but would also be at a significant distance from the other extreme. This is not surprising, for everywhere one looks, one can find impediments which cause us, in typically Canadian fashion, to huddle

together somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. What are these impediments? (1) In the first place, some are traceable to the fact that our universities, whatever their origin may have been, are now firmly and irrevocably embraced in a system supported by *public* funding, and are therefore subject to all the pressures which such a system imposes. The kind of competition in which *private* institutions must engage, as in the United States, has vanished from the Canadian scene. And our political realities are such that they are all going to be kept in business. They may *languish* but they will *survive*. In Ontario, for example, the Bovey Commission was instructed that in developing an operational plan for the provincial system the closure of any institution was *ab initio* ruled out. I discovered that in Ontario the governing reality behind this edict was the existence of "the area-based legislature." Analogous realities, however, prevail elsewhere as well.

We are therefore – and this is my first point – not in a Darwinian struggle for survival. We face no such threats as the possibility that up to 30 percent of our universities may disappear or be swallowed up in some merger by 1995. We don't have the stimulus of the "tremble factor." When an architect in ancient Rome had finished his supervision of the construction of an arch, he had to stand under it while the scaffolding was removed – a procedure which by exacting an appropriate penalty for his own faulty workmanship induced a suitably vivid "tremble factor." Clearly, in our situation no comparable penalty is applied. The "tremble factor" doesn't operate.

(2) Our systems of public support militate in other ways, not only against a Darwinian mode of competition but also against any high-powered drives towards excellence or even quality. Governments, of course, will make loud protestations about the imperative need for quality in university teaching and research. In Ontario, for instance, the mandate of the Bovey Commission specified that quality was to be given the highest priority in the Commission's recommendations. As some of you may recall, the Commission concluded on the basis of its own investigations, that if funding was *not* to be increased, and if quality was to be even modestly enhanced, some reduction in accessibility would unfortunately have to be accepted. When one considers the relationships amongst funding levels, accessibility, and quality of education, it is indeed difficult to escape the conclusion that when you fix any two of these the third must also be determined. As events proved, however, politicians of all hues rushed to denounce the heartless recommendations of the Commission – without, however, managing in the least to subvert its logic. "Accessibility" was pronounced to be the paramount value, and quality disappeared into limbo.

In short, the stress laid by Keller upon the importance of *quality* as a major element in strategic planning, though not of course absent from university concern, is in our context unlikely to have as prominent a role as is stipulated in his entrepreneurial, dynamic account of strategic planning.

(3) Thirdly, there is the serious inadequacy of operating support for our Canadian universities, an inadequacy which bids fair to continue or perhaps even get worse, given the continuing stand-off between federal and provincial

governments over funding arrangements. Our institutions have simply run out of "slack" or financial room to manoeuvre. To be sure, if we could effect massive changes in their current *modus operandi*, a considerable measure of flexibility could be recovered. There are obvious rigidities in the way in which academic departments and faculties tend to function, and there are serious diseconomies in the manner in which we govern and administer our institutions. If such rigidities could be even in part dissolved, or greater economies in the management of our affairs be effected, the savings would be substantial. Barring such modifications, however, universities have far less power to change direction than they used to possess. It always takes energy to impart movement or to change the direction of movement; and if additional resources are not readily available, the taking of substantively new directions or the mounting of major new thrusts in teaching, research or service is increasingly difficult.

One recalls, with nostalgia, how different conditions were two decades ago. At that time, there was growth in our financial resources, and growth is a universal solvent for all sorts of problems. We were on a flood tide of rising resources; and if through some navigational error we got ourselves stranded, we knew that the rising waters would soon float us free. Entering a tricky harbour on an ebb tide, however, is a quite different matter, demanding not only navigational skills of the highest order but also full agreement both as to our destination and, what is of equal importance, about who will steer the ship. When resources are tight and consensus is hard to find, the bold measures called for in Keller's account of strategic planning are unlikely to be possible.

Nor is it a matter merely of financial resources. University presidents and senior administrators nowadays labour under pressures of an inordinate degree. Energies get consumed in fighting the daily outbreaks of brush fires springing up in unpredictable fashion at almost any point in the system. Little time and energy is left to be directed to sustained attacks on the problems of planning. As Herbert Simon once observed, *attention* is the scarcest resource of all (Simon, 1973). If it is in scanty supply, the tasks of planning are likely to suffer from neglect.

(4) Fourthly, in many of our universities planning initiatives are further constrained by severe deficiencies in *capital* funding. Governments may be reluctant to interfere to any marked degree with the ways in which universities dispose of their operating grants. But they do retain firm control over capital grants, at least for any project of a major order of magnitude. This control can often be a most effective way of steering university endeavours: if the plant is not there, the program cannot go ahead except at the cost of squeezing out something which already exists. Autonomy, however, has not been infringed, since governments have not interfered with any *existing* program!

(5) Lastly, there is the sheer volatility and unpredictability of the social and economic context in which we have to operate. There is a great deal of talk among institutional researchers about new and sophisticated methods of "scanning the environment," in the manner suggested in Cope's account of strategic planning. My scepticism, born of many of my own mistakes plus those of my colleagues, is

not very much allayed by all these techniques. None of them seems to be capable of telling us such mundane but critically important things as the price of money next week, the price of oil next month, the price and saleability of prairie wheat or British Columbia lumber next year. Or, to come closer to home, have we really got hold of infallible methods of predicting our enrolment five years from now? and, of equally great concern, the *composition* of the enrolment we may then have? Here again we find, rooted in the system itself, a major impediment to strategic planning in the ambitious mode which some would advocate.

### **The Consequences of System Impediments**

Under all these systemic or environmental limitations, it is not surprising if (as I suspect may be the case) there is probably less enthusiasm for and less actual effort going on in the way of major planning initiatives than was the case ten years ago. I happened at that time to be a member of an AUCC Committee on Planning, which was, I must say, one of the most competent and knowledgeable committees on which I have ever served. Several of us collaborated, under the chairmanship of A.W.R. Carrothers, then President of the AUCC, in the preparation of a volume entitled *Planning For Planning* (1974), which received a quite reasonable degree of critical acclaim upon its appearance in 1974. When I look back today at its analysis and recommendations, it seems to belong to a most distant era, reflecting as it does a faith that rational and comprehensive planning by universities and with governments was possible.

In this connection one could also note the conclusion arrived at by Clark Kerr, in the above cited report, *Presidents Make a Difference*. To the question: "Is it now more difficult to get highly qualified persons to serve as presidents of colleges and universities than it was in earlier times – more specifically the early 1960's?" the Commission responded in the affirmative. A second question ran as follows: "Are presidents less engaged in making long-term plans and in preparing their institutions for the long-run future than they were in earlier times? Do they concentrate more on current problems?" The answer (page x) is as follows:

"Yes and yes. Presidents explain this lower level of preparation for the future in several ways: more pressing current problems and more constraints in responding to them than before; more pressures from many sources on the presidents' time and for their attention; greater uncertainties about the future, which make planning harder; managing decline is more difficult than managing growth and advance planning might actually be counter-productive in terms of exacerbating tensions on campus (the only safe plan, one president said, is 'pie in the sky' and there is no more pie in the sky); and the relatively short terms of presidents, which reduce the opportunity, and even the incentive, to plan for the future. Also, some presidents have been repudiated by their boards when they have made tough and controversial plans; the word of this spreads quickly and widely." (Commission, 1984).

## Strategic Planning and the Institutional Context

Given these very real systemic constraints, we seem forced to moderate any ambitions we may have had to launch ourselves into some dramatic, dynamic, comprehensive strategic planning effort. But we should at least face the question: Could we not be engaging in a somewhat more vigorous and effective style of planning than we are currently doing? Granted, we may not be able to move along the planning spectrum quite as far as some models would suggest. But we may profitably ask whether, for instance, we are paying sufficient attention to the claims of *quality*. Are there measures to enhance quality which do lie within our power – even modest ones? Are we engaging in a sufficiently rigorous institutional self-assessment? Or are we content with the rhetoric of our calendars and of our convocation exercises? And, most important of all questions: Can we not effect some substantive improvements in our systems of governance and decision-making?

## Issues in Governance and Management

With one of Keller's themes I find myself in wholehearted agreement, namely, on the necessity of bringing about some changes in the ways in which we typically manage our affairs. As the old-fashioned report cards used to say, in this region there is considerable "room for improvement."

In this connection I shall address three questions. In the first place, I think it is essential to understand more clearly than we often do the various senses in which the term "collegiality" is used, so as to avoid what I think are the gross confusions into which academics frequently fall with respect to their proper role in university governance. Secondly, I shall make, if not an argument, at least an appeal for some abatement of the adversarial spirit which tends to disfigure so many of our institutions, and which acts to retard the progress of *any* enterprise which requires community support. Thirdly, I want to ask if it is not time to re-examine in a critical manner one central feature of our management systems, namely, the principle of frequent rotation of headships and other offices in the academic hierarchy. I believe that this practice militates against some elements of sound planning, and that it is time to question this particular academic dogma.

## Two Senses of Collegiality

It is a familiar theme, and one that needs no labouring here, that our contemporary universities are characterized by a wide diffusion of authority and therefore power. Even in former times, authority in the university always had to have some effective linkages with expert knowledge. In simpler times, however, when academic disciplines were not only much fewer in number but far more stable in their existence over time, an outstanding university president could and did put his own personal stamp on the entire institution, right down even to junior personnel

appointments or departmental policy. The contemporary president cannot even try to emulate that style of leadership. It is not the institution, or in Burton Clark's terminology, "the enterprise" which is the primary mode: rather, it is the academic discipline. As disciplinary boundaries move steadily out from their centre, in many cases at increasingly rapid rates, central authority and control over these operational or "bottom level" units inevitably diminishes.

Moreover, the unity of the institution itself is fractured by this growth in expertise. When bonds with professional colleagues outside the "enterprise" exceed in strength and number those with colleagues in other disciplines within the institution, the sense of community is bound to weaken. So does the capacity of the president to secure the consensus he will need for mounting any major reforms or effecting any significant reallocations of resources.

Despite all the difficulties it brings in its train, however, and despite the balkanization of authority which it produces, collegiality, *in the sense of collective control by a body of peers over matters within their professional competence* is here to stay. It is indispensable and must have a place of primacy at the core of the operating systems of the contemporary university. I do not think that the control of affairs at that primary level need or should always be absolute. There are times when the "peer review process" breaks down and when some strong external hand is needed to set things aright. Aside from such exceptions, however, we cannot gainsay the operation of collegiality in this first sense.

However, there are or ought to be *limits* to the sphere of its operation. As we move up the university decision-making hierarchy, we clearly have to recognize the existence of quite different functions, namely, those of resource allocation and those modifications in the directions taken by the enterprise which may accompany resource reallocations. And surely it should be clear that when what is at issue is a division of resources between two contending groups of experts, the arbiter of the values involved, while he may himself be an expert in some discipline, is not functioning *qua* expert in that adjudication. If chemists and physicists are contending for the same pool of resources, the adjudication is not an affair either of physics or chemistry. We cannot and we do not recognize a special "expertise" in values! Consequently, when values are at stake, we have passed out of the province of expertise in the strict sense.

To be sure, knowledgeable academics are essential in the running of the total enterprise; they have an indispensable role to play in *all* the councils of the university. But the task at senior levels is rather one of exercising good judgment, of displaying practical wisdom. "Collegiality" *in the sense of genuine partnership or collegueship* between administrative officers on the one hand and academics on the other will be essential. But that mode of "collegiality" is not to be confused with the exercise of peer judgment, of the sort we find at the primary operating levels.

It is the failure to distinguish between these two quite different senses of "collegiality" that is responsible for much of the intellectual and emotional confusion about the operational control of the university. One still hears from

academics the cry: "But *we* are the University!" accompanied by the claim that it is their prerogative not only to administer departmental affairs but also to determine at least the major priorities and broad outlines of overall institutional policy, leaving to some mere "administrator" the role of the civil servant, namely, that of implementing and supervising the execution of policy.

As the late Dr. J. A. Corry once put it, what surely needs to be recognized is that authority must go hand in hand with the kind of task or function in question. What is required is that members of the academic community apply their own professed principle, which is that only those with the requisite competence have the right to make judgments. It is a principle to which academics properly defer in matters that fall within the scope of their own disciplines. If university governance is to be improved, if real consensus is to be achieved, it can only be achieved by ensuring an appropriate measure of authority and power at the centre, not only in the departmental regions, for the simple reason that under conditions of financial stringency all of the "regions" are necessarily locked in mortal combat for their share of the institution's resources.

It is only at the centre that there can be any appreciable degree of knowledge about the factors which influence the wellbeing of the institution as a whole. Although fewer decisions than was formerly the case can now be taken exclusively by the centre, it is important to arrive at agreement about what powers must be there and about what powers are to be decentralized. This task of putting our affairs in better order is one which will require the cooperation of all members of the university. All parties have a fundamental identity of underlying interests, and adversarial climates are luxuries that can no longer be afforded.

### **Moderation of the Adversarial Climate**

In the second place, I would urge that if we are to do a better job of planning our future, we cannot ignore the need to act as a community, with reasonable consensus secured for our plans, which otherwise cannot come to full fruition. In this connection, it is imperative that we make every effort to reduce the all too common adversarial spirit which disfigures our institutions. If a university stands for anything, it surely is for the primacy of rational inquiry and debate as a means of arriving at truth. There is a certain "tone of voice" or style which ought to characterize not merely the discussions of experts in the regions of their disciplines, but which should influence *every* debate, even those which escape the strict boundaries of a specific subject matter.

One recognizes that the life of a vital university has never been free of tension and conflict, nor can it well be expected to be otherwise. What is of cardinal importance, however, is that conflict be contained and resolved in a rational manner, and without rending the fabric of the institution. Rationality is by no means the whole of wisdom; but it is surely one of its chief ingredients, and in its absence our debates and our decisions will be seriously marred.

In this connection, one hopes, perhaps in vain, that it might be possible to effect some abatement of the strongly adversarial attitudes engendered by the industrial-

type model of collective bargaining, which in my view unnecessarily exacerbates tensions which in its absence would be far less pronounced. I for one have never been able to see how that form of collective bargaining, with its built-in adversarial structures, is compatible with collegiality in the *second* sense in which I have used the term, namely, where it connotes partnership in a common enterprise. The rhetoric of “you manage, we grieve” is hardly consonant with the rule of reason. Indeed, the whole apparatus which is brought into play explicitly *repudiates* the rule of reason, resting as it ultimately does on the quite non-rational *argumentum ad baculum*, or the simple appeal to the big stick. In so far as students are caught up in this power struggle, and treated sometimes as mere pawns in the game, they are no longer being treated as junior colleagues in the enterprise of learning, but simply as “clients” or “consumers,” and the old bonds of community have clearly been shattered.

### **The Dogma of Term Appointments**

No matter how resolute we are, we cannot wholly rid ourselves of some of the difficulties encountered in the management of the university, for the good and sufficient reason that they are inherent in the very nature of the academic enterprise itself. Our educational goals, for instance, are bound to be tenuous, value-laden, and problematic. There is no way in which they can be quantified, and no objectively measurable “bottom line.” The role of technology in our operations will also be limited, at least on the academic side. Nothing will replace the “soft technology” of direct person-to-person contact between a good teacher and a promising student. The life of the mind and the spirit, by its very nature, is unpromising material for the technological apparatus to handle.

But not every aspect of the management of our affairs is rooted in the very essence of the academic task. One habit we have fallen into, which makes the management of our affairs not only unnecessarily complicated but horribly expensive in respect of its consumption of scarce and expensive “manpower,” is that we allow or even encourage participation in decision-making to be so fluid. Participants wander in and out of decision-making bodies, and “green” academics are constantly coming on to advisory bodies where substantial knowledge is required before they can become effective – only to disappear at the moment they become competent. What chiefly needs re-examination, however, is the dogma that appointments to such offices as that of department head, dean, president, etc., must in principle be filled only on a term basis, and that term frequently a short one. To be sure, the former system was not without its faults; but when we implemented the so-called Duff-Berdahl reforms and adopted the practice of rotating headships, deanships, and so forth, we gave little if any thought to the positive values that would be lost with the change. I can well recall the warnings of Dean Maxwell Cohen of McGill at that time; he spoke in prescient manner of “the untried dogma of rotating headships” and warned in eloquent terms of some of its dangers.

When offices such as these are filled on a short-term basis, we render ourselves incapable of discharging certain functions necessary for good planning. Much of the incentive for improving your department, for instance, is taken away when you realize that you will not be there to enjoy the fruits of your labours. (Recall also that passage from *Presidents Make a Difference*: namely, the testimony that short terms reduce both the opportunity and the incentive to plan for the future.) Again, no person, and no body, in any university with which I am familiar has any longer the slightest responsibility for helping to determine the succession to senior offices. It would be considered grossly offensive if anyone were even to raise the question. No business, I presume, would long survive if it were so heedless of the need to plan its future. I suggest we need to get rid of the supercilious and foolish attitude that the discharge of these offices is something which any amateur can readily handle, and recognize the values inherent in a less fluid and more stable kind of participation in decision making.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Operational Field – Conflicting Objectives**

When we look at the great number of conflicting objectives with which a contemporary university is burdened, one may be pardoned for wondering how any such system can cope at all. There are the claims made in the name of accessibility in the general sense, i.e., of admission to *some* program in the university. There are pressures for enlargement of quotas in specific professional disciplines. There are forces at work to lower various kinds of barriers which have restricted the progress of many disadvantaged groups in our society, and to take action to correct alleged or real employment inequities. All of such claims or pressures, no matter how worthy the cause, are in competition for scarce resources which the university could well put to other uses.

Excellence, for example, is also a principal objective, and it is difficult if not impossible to avoid the conclusion that excellence inherently demands concentration of and selectivity in the use of resources. That conclusion will hold not only for excellence in teaching, but also in the realms of research and of service.

In the field of research, we encounter the plea for the maintenance of an adequate level of *basic* research, across the entire spectrum of the disciplines, but perhaps with special feeling for the areas of the liberal Arts subjects. On the other hand, governments and industry clamour for greater attention to the more applied and utilitarian forms of research, such as our professional faculties can provide. So there is a continuous tension, at least in most of our universities, between the needs and claims of the professional schools and those of the faculties of Arts and Science and their closely cognate disciplines.

The public often looks to the immediate social *utility* of various forms of university education. Such an interest may strengthen the hands of our “manpower planners,” in spite of the fact that such planning, almost without exception, has been a disaster area. In an era when university graduates may have several careers before retirement, the fallacies of such planning, in particular of the notion that a

person can be "fitted" for the duration of his or her life into some specific vocational slot becomes more absurd with every passing year. We can profit, I think, from the plea of Howard Bowen, one of the most eminent of American economists of higher education, that "education is not designed to prepare people to do whatever work flows from the blind and predestined imperatives of technology; rather, it is intended to educate people of vision and sensitivity, who will have the motives to direct technology into humanly constructive channels." (Bowen, 1974).

One could go on at some length in listing these competing demands upon the institution. What makes their management more difficult, however, is that none of these contending forces stays constant. The operational field is caught up in a continuous and dynamic process of *change*. Pressures steadily *increase*, for example, in the direction of achieving greater equity for hitherto disadvantaged groups. Native peoples seek *wider* opportunities for education, women ask for *enhanced* realization of employment equity, and so forth. Increasing demands are made upon our professional disciplines, across the entire spectrum of teaching, research and service. The cost burden grows steadily greater, and so do external pressures, especially in areas such as medicine, where quality of service *and* accessibility are both imperative.

In the area of research, both dollar volumes and overall levels of activity have grown enormously in the last few years, indeed to such an extent that what was once a rather casual activity, almost a hobby, has now become a dominant force in the internal economy of most of our universities, so that in more than one faculty external research income may exceed the direct operating revenues of the unit in question. As we all know, the burden of carrying the indirect costs of resource-intensive research can produce grave distortions elsewhere in the operation of the university – most obviously, in the quality of education available to undergraduates in the liberal arts and sciences. We come full circle: if the pursuit of research means the serious impairment of educational quality, of what real value is it to extend access? Access to programs of poor or indifferent quality is an empty right of access indeed.

The pressures to engage in research, however, continue to mount. Governments or government agencies, in particular, exert pressure on universities towards a greater emphasis in developing new areas of research, both basic and applied, especially in the so-called "high technology" areas in the belief that such an emphasis is necessary for the economic wellbeing of the province or nation. In a number of instances, initiatives by governments are directing substantial funds towards specific university sectors, concurrent with reductions or very minimal increases in the level of traditional overall block funding.

So we now move inevitably into the second theme, namely: How do we manage for change? No doubt this problem can be addressed at various levels. For example, our universities are not free from the effects of departmental rigidities in courses and programs of study, and these can impede even essential changes. There are other barriers across departmental or faculty boundaries which prevent

the most effective use of our resources. Very often our internal reward systems are such as to discourage innovation in teaching or in research. With these and similar administrative or managerial questions I do not propose to deal. My concern is rather to reflect on issues of a more pervasive and fundamental kind, connected with what are the central values and tasks of the university as it confronts the problem of coping with change.

### Disciplines as Sources of Change

The starting point for my reflections lies in the observation of Burton Clark, that universities are typically "bottom heavy" organizations. As we have seen, he speaks of the disciplines as having primacy over "the enterprise," i.e., the institution. Moreover, in his view, "the fundamental adaptive mechanism of universities and larger academic systems lies in the capacity (of the disciplines) to add and subtract fields of knowledge and related units without disturbing all the others" (Clark, 1983, p. 186). Change, in other words, reflects the bottom-heavy structure. In Clark's words:

"Despite the belief of many observers that academic systems change significantly only when pressured by external forces, such systems increasingly exhibit innovation and adaptation among their bottom units. Invention and diffusion are institutionalized in the work of the departments and counterpart units that embody the discipline and the professions. Universities, and many nonuniversity units, move ahead in a somewhat self-propelled fashion in those areas of new thought that are perceived by academics as acceptable within the general paradigm of academic knowledge. Such change is widely overlooked since it is not announced in master plans or ministerial bulletins and is not introduced on a global scale" (Clark, 1983, p. 234).

To some degree, Clark's thesis might be disputed. We all know of units which stubbornly resist change, or of universities so encrusted with barnacles that they had to be reformed from without. But, as the pace of development of new knowledge picks up, as strong departments do press towards the frontiers of knowledge, as industry and governments exert increasingly strong pressure or offer strong inducements for them to change, Clark's picture has far more cogency than it might have had in the past.

Let us follow through with this analysis, and ask: Faced with these forces of change, which in some respects will be centrifugal in nature, what does the institution, the enterprise, do? It has two choices. One is to drift along, adopting a *laissez-faire* attitude, and abstain from trying to control or react in coherent fashion to the processes of change. The second choice is to make a deliberate, reflective decision to seek in some way to control and shape the effects of these changes. The first route is surely hardly tenable; to take it is sooner or later to invite disaster. To be sure, one may well wonder who, or what body, has the wisdom to make the necessary choices. But to take *no* decision *is* to take a decision. We cannot opt out.

### The Institutional "Idea"

What does the alternative involve? I suggest that we must begin with the set of fundamental objectives which characterize the institution or the enterprise. Within certain broad limits, these central objectives have acted to shape the institution's course of development. These overarching principles are at the same time a set of institutional values or ideals. In philosophical language, they might in their unity be said to constitute the institutional "Idea." There is not only "the Idea of *a* university": there is also an Idea of *this* university. As norms governing institutional development, they also constitute the "internal coding" of the enterprise. Sometimes (as noted earlier) they are encapsulated in an institutional story, or "organizational saga," which may be a powerful aid to maintaining a vital sense of the institution's identity and its distinctive mission. That sense of identity may be weaker than in simpler times, but some part of the central Idea will still be operative. Since it is general in nature, and not a blueprint, one cannot "read off" detailed decisions nor make appropriate value choices from it alone. Yet it will determine what major options are at least "starters" in the planning arena. Thanks to the influence of this institutional Idea, each university will to some degree have its own character, its own way of being in the academic world. It will also have its own way of *acting*, its own structure and procedures through which it makes its choices.

### Idea and Reality

"Mission statements" frequently start from some formulation of the institution's regnant Idea, or set of general goals, and endeavour to move from such principles to the articulation of specific courses of future action. We fall into the belief that our first task is to become very clear about these objectives; and we think that once we do *that*, we shall immediately discern what specific choices we must make. But matters are not that simple. If we try to work with these principles in isolation from the ground level, operational *realities* of the enterprise, we shall find that "the broad statements of purpose and goal, of essence and nature" which emerge from such an effort "serve poorly as accounts of reality and are inappropriate when used as guides to action" (Clark, 1983, p. 22).

Institutional planners or decision makers need to know, for example, not just what are the official norms of the enterprise relating to such values as accessibility and quality; they must also understand how those very broad, general objectives are finding actual expression in *this* classroom or in *that* laboratory. To the extent that the academic members of the enterprise have internalized in their own behaviour the core values of the institution, their specific choices and actions at the operational level will in some degree reflect those ideals. Obviously, however, in the real world all sorts of extraneous influences will make themselves felt. The governing ideals are not only *reflected* but *deflected*. Sensible thinking and planning for the university must take account, therefore, not only of the general

Idea of the institution but also of the concrete ways in which, through its operating units, the enterprise is *actually* functioning. It is only *after* we have become thoroughly acquainted in an empirical way with all these realities that we can proceed to become more clear about our operational targets.

### Pattern and Consensus

In the minds of our decision makers, then, there must be some coming together of awareness of the overarching, general objectives of the enterprise with a grasp of the specific actualities. Out of this marriage there must emerge a "pattern" or a "matrix" to which we can adhere as we confront and seek to manage a world of turbulent change. Our decision makers and their close advisers need to find time to visit their operating units, preferably meeting the members of these units "on their own turf," and ascertain what is really happening at that level. They must find out, by this *empirical* method, what for all practical purposes the institution is really choosing to do. They should not expect to find tidy, consistent patterns of choice. Universities are trying to realize certain complex sets of values, such as equity, quality, utility, freedom and so forth. One cannot hope to maximize all of them and hence compromises are inevitable. But if the decision makers are to have at their command not merely the abstract, general "knowledge by description" which formal reports from the units contain; if they are to have a real, first-hand "knowledge by acquaintance" of a deep and intuitive kind, they must establish this direct line of communication with the operative realities of the university.

If planning is to be at all effective, it is clear that some genuine degree of consensus is essential. Consensus, however, will emerge only to the degree that people feel themselves to be members of some *community*, only where they have shared understandings of common purposes, and shared values and expectations. If decision makers and their advisers have established a good *rapproch* with their faculty, so that there is a good cognitive and emotive resonance between the two groups, some sense of community will have been achieved, and on that foundation one can build further. In its absence, planning or decision-making will not have roots outside the central administration and will be increasingly ineffective in the university of today.

### The Nature of Decision-Making

Let us suppose that our decision makers are equipped with this "pattern" or "matrix": they have not only an understanding of the essential general objectives of the enterprise but also possess some intuitive grasp of its "existential" realities. How do they arrive at decisions as to its current and future operations?

I want to suggest that we too often have an unduly intellectualistic model in our minds of the way in which decisions actually do get made, at least in the context of the university. We talk sometimes as though everything can be logically derived from some unassailable general principles, as though, indeed, we were dealing

with essences in the realm of pure mathematics. But reality is much messier. In good part, we are engaged not in a deductive enterprise *from* some first principles but in an inductive search *for* some guiding principles. A second point, but one frequently ignored, is that the values with which we are dealing are so frequently *incommensurable*. Shall we buy some sophisticated diagnostic tool for the Faculty of Medicine, which will reduce human suffering and save lives as well? Or should we put an equivalent sum into programs and proper facilities for our School of Music? Shall we buy needed equipment for Engineering, or provide better library services for our hard-pressed Arts Faculty? Every choice realizes some good, but only certain claims can be honoured. There is no one set of balances in which all can be weighed; and there is no tidy calculus to relieve us of the burden of decision.

What we must hope for is that our decision makers can and do display the kind of practical wisdom of which Aristotle spoke in his writings on ethics and politics. They must be well informed, fair-minded and balanced in their judgment. They must understand the kind of institutional "pattern" to which they are adhering. In the final analysis, and at the point of decision, their own beliefs and values must come into play; they will have to decide what complex choice of values strikes them as being most fitting. Wisdom requires more than intellectual capacity; it entails good judgment about ends and about the appropriate means to their realization. Though the process is not reducible to quantitative treatment, it is nonetheless rational, if under "rationality" we include the quality of personal interaction in community. There are no manuals on which one can rely, and the choices one university makes for itself may well not be valid for another. In each institution, the decision makers need to have an intuitive understanding of the ways in which the place is constrained by *its* past, influenced by *its* present, and oriented to certain opportunities for *its* future, not that of some other place.

### **Pattern and Probe**

Let me now relate these remarks to the process of coping with change. Our disciplinary units at the bottom levels of the enterprise are going to be involved, whether we like it or not, in "inspired lunges across the frontier," to use a phrase coined by the late Dr. J. A. Corry. They will be sinking "probes" into the unknown, and coming back with discoveries which will change the face of their discipline or related disciplines. Without the innovative effect of such "probes," the system will have no vitality and will quickly atrophy. On the other hand, without the guiding influence of some pattern or matrix, there can be no conservation of system and hence again no possibility of its survival as a coherent whole. There must be some kind of interaction or "dialectic" between pattern and probe, between conservation and innovation.<sup>3</sup> Conservation or pattern ensures that there will be "order in the large." That order, however, must be consistent with "freedom in the small," freedom for our disciplines to be creative.<sup>4</sup>

At a very deep level, "management for change" involves this fundamental question: How are we to balance pattern and probe? conservation and innovation?

order and freedom? Universities are indeed (in the lucid analysis of Cohen and March) “organized anarchies.” There is “chaos” and “disorder,” but it must be disorder that is sufficiently constrained by some general principle or pattern that it can at the same time permit and even foster creativity. There is no common pattern which will characterize all our universities. The problem of defining (and redefining) our pattern is a highly “situational” or context-bound affair. Each enterprise must establish its own choice among such values as equity, quality, utility, freedom, and loyalty. Resolution has to be effected in the concrete situation in which we live and work, not in the abstract.

Whatever we do, the result “will exhibit a bewildering mixture of the open and the closed, the elitist and the democratic, the flexible and the rigid, the traditional and the modern” (Clark, 1983, p. 254). We have not only to think but as it were to “live through” the experience of resolving as best we may these tensions. The complexities involved can never be fully articulated or rationalized. But practice does not wait upon theory. We must choose and we must act. And paradoxically, we sometimes can articulate our values only *after* we have acted, after we have responded, in holistic and not mechanical fashion, to the challenges arising from the complex interaction of our central pattern with the turbulent environment without.

### **The Redefinition of Pattern**

As circumstances change, our guiding pattern may itself have to be altered. We certainly cannot use that pattern as a rigid template to be imposed in all decision situations. Judgment will be required at every turn, as we seek to achieve our own appropriate balance amongst competing values and competing allocations of resources. It will require all the wisdom we can muster to decide when to impose some central order and when to let go. And there may occur a shock to our enterprise so massive that our traditional pattern is no longer adequate. In such a case, the pattern itself may have to be altered; but one would hope that this would come about through the operation of its own internal coding, just as a good constitution provides means for its own amendment. There may have to be a radical reconfiguration of our values or our structures or possibly both.

As a case in point, take research; and let me suppose for the sake of argument that some fundamental changes in the way in which it is financed, at least in the case of resource-intensive research, will occur. New channels of government funding might be developed. But such a development might bring with it not only new relationships with government but new structures and relationships within the university: one unit might get operationally more and more detached from the rest. That could induce a marked change in our pattern or set of principles. On the other hand, if funding relief is not forthcoming, at some point controls must somehow and somewhere be placed upon the freedom of the researcher. But then we are having to curtail “freedom in the small,” and to make a different kind of change in our governing pattern, inasmuch as the region of research has in our universities

traditionally been the kingdom of pure laissez-faire. Still, we might have to resort to such a measure so as to preserve some tolerable "order in the large," under the protection of which the quality of teaching in other domains of the enterprise could be protected. I suppose that there could be a third alternative, namely, to surrender the idea of fostering quality in undergraduate education. But that might entail an equally great change in our traditional pattern of values.

### **The Bonds of Community**

I have been arguing that a certain kind of "dialectic" needs to be sustained in the process of articulating a sense of our own identity, in realizing what distinctive set of values we are called upon, in our historical situation, to choose and to act upon. I have also indicated that this dialectic needs to be sustained as, in coping with change, we are forced to redefine our pattern, and move to different choices or, it may be, to the implementation of different structures of governance and decision-making. In all this process, top-down initiative from leaders is of course essential; and charismatic presidents are indeed welcome! The trouble with charismatic presidents is that eventually they will disappear, and leave us to our own resources. And there are times when in all honesty one must wonder whether nowadays our sense of community is strong enough to enable us to cope with our problems, to permit us to achieve an effective and not just a nominal consensus about our values and our future directions.

The tragedy of so many relationships in the modern age, and in our universities as well, is that instead of being bound together largely by *ideas*, we are more and more bound only by *interests*, chiefly of an economic kind. Bonding by economic interests, however, makes for fragile connections indeed. Yet I refuse to admit that a university is a *mere* conglomerate. If we were in that extreme a condition, we could not cope at all. We would be complete decisional paraplegics, leaving governments little alternative but to effect our rescue from without.

The task of building community, where it has been injured, is clearly not a trifling one, and I have no magic solutions to bring forward. What I believe we must do is to work with whatever consensus is there, however small or at whatever level it exists. We have to nurture and develop it, in a way which will engender resonance between the community at large and the decision makers, so that even though our choices may be difficult, unclear, and full of compromise, there will be practical wisdom behind them and sufficient community support for them. Community may indeed be languishing, but we must start from what we do have, and find some cause or concern on which collaboration is possible. One must hope that out of a series of such collaborative efforts growth in community will occur, and that it will serve as a foundation for still further growth.

Such a policy, building as it does upon an act of faith in ourselves and in our colleagues, is clearly not without risk. But we have nowhere else to turn. We must have confidence in the rightness of our pattern of values and the structures through which we believe that pattern should be implemented. We must believe that in the

broadest and best sense of the term, there can be a truly "collegial" response to the challenges which a turbulent environment will impose upon us. We can never act without invoking the intellectual virtues characteristic of the academic enterprise at its best. At the same time, we must recognize that more than intellect is involved, and (as Clark puts it) that "intuition, tradition, and faith" are also "important bases of choice" (Clark, 1983, p. 22).

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## NOTES

1. The new ambience of greater participation by more groups, each expecting consultation, can lead to exhausting multiple negotiations with less likelihood of results than in earlier times. Too many people want to get in on the act; too many lights flash 'walk' and 'don't walk' at the same time. (p.3).
2. The Jarratt Committee (in section 3.71 of its report) made the following comment: "Universities are unusual in that little formal attempt is made on a regular basis to appraise academic staff with a view to their personal development and to succession planning within the institution."

3. I have borrowed the two terms from Arthur Porter, as used in his report: *Towards a Community University: A Study of Learning at Western*. See the review by R.J. Baker, in *University Affairs*, February, 1972.
4. I have taken the expression, "ordered in the large" from a speech delivered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in April, 1985, by Dr. Edward E. David, Jr., President of Exxon Research and Engineering Company. The address was entitled: "Technology and Risk: New Strategies for Industrial Science and Engineering."

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