

SIX

ISSUES

At September's Alumni Leaders' Conference in Columbia, Interim Chancellor Herb Schooling talked about some issues confronting the University, "Issues that all of us must consider, layman as well as professional." Here is some of what he said.



Should the University become more restrictive in its admission requirement and limit enrollments to the intellectually elite and academically motivated?

Some say too many young people are going to college, that many have neither the ability nor the motivation to insure a reasonable return on the investment in their education. These individuals suggest that many such students ought to attend vocational schools or two year junior colleges and ought not be cluttering up a university campus.

We are already rather restrictive. Something like 80 per cent of our students are in the upper half of their high school classes. Fewer than one per cent come from the lower third.

On the other hand, should we deny opportunity,

even the opportunity to fail? The late bloomers, the returning war veteran, the bright lad who didn't find himself in high school deserve a chance, some would say. It's better to take a few students who may be marginal than, in the process of denying all marginal students, exclude a lad of delayed promise.

Furthermore, some would bar all non-resident enrollments, or at least further limit the limited number we now accept. Some would say we ought to expand graduate programs, but actively limit undergraduate enrollments.

What is the appropriate relationship between a campus and university-wide administration in a multi-campus university system? How much autonomy should an individual campus have?

No university system has as yet satisfactorily resolved the relationship problems that develop when a multi-campus system is established. Tension, friction, misunderstanding, conflict have been the by-products of most such unions.

I suspect such conflicts were inevitable. An independent campus is certain to resist a reduction in its prerogatives and freedoms to act. Like an older brother or sister when a new baby arrives, it takes a while to adjust to the fact that attention and concern must be shared.

I honestly think we are well on the way toward establishing the kind of relationship between campus and University administration that will preserve necessary campus autonomy, but at the same time provide for the necessary coordination of policies and programs and judicious use of the state's resources.

How should colleges and universities face up to the realities of less than adequate funding?

There are four ways to face up to a budget crunch.

(1) Sharply limit enrollments particularly in costly programs such as graduate school, medicine, veterinary medicine; (2) maintain present programs, but spread funds a bit more thinly and undertake no new ones; (3) defer costly maintenance and the purchase of expensive equipment, reduce service staffs, and eliminate financial incentives used to attract and retain able faculty members; and (4) establish priorities; selectively fund those programs with highest priority, phase out

or deemphasize certain programs, and replace old programs with new ones.

We have elected the fourth approach. We cannot meet all requests or demands made of us, no matter how legitimate they may be. We will have to pick and choose.

This does not mean we should not continue to seek additional resources to support and strengthen needed and essential programs. It simply means that we are realistic enough to know that additional funds are hard to come by and will never be sufficient to adequately meet all program needs, that we will be able to establish new programs only by replacing old ones, and that strengthening high priority programs can come about in many instances only at the expense of lower priority ones. Identifying the low priority ones without creating serious faculty unrest or unduly disturbing concerned alumni is a formidable task, perhaps an impossible one.

How can the Campus establish and maintain appropriate balance between its research, public service and teaching functions?

Admittedly, over the past decade prestige and federal dollars have been associated primarily with the research function of the University. I am not apologizing for our research interest or activity. It is in the research and public service areas that we differ from a state college operation. I don't believe anyone would say the Medical School should discontinue its search for a cancer cure or the College of Agriculture should not bother to develop a strain of corn resistant to the blight.

In my opinion, it is not so much that we have overemphasized research, but rather that we have underemphasized instruction and concern for the undergraduate student.

We are trying to get at this perceived imbalance in a variety of ways.

(1) Place appropriate emphasis upon teaching in the evaluation of faculty performance and subsequent salary adjustment recommendations; (2) improve the selection, preparation and supervision of the graduate teaching assistant, whom we must continue to use for a variety of reasons; (3) revise curricular programs, initiating new courses, replacing obsolete offerings, and making effective use of technological devices; and (4) upgrade undergraduate advisement.

How can students and faculty be appropriately involved in the governance of an educational institution and at the same time protect the public's interest, insure effective administrative direction of the enterprise and make certain there is proper accountability?

No institution has satisfactorily resolved this issue. In some institutions administrative leadership has abdicated; chaos has resulted. In others the administration has attempted to maintain firm, more or less dictatorial or paternalistic control. Riots have been the result.

Surely there is a tenable posture between these two extremes.

How can the University react to the many divergent pressures directed toward it, maintain its integrity, and yet avoid the charge of being irresponsible?

The pressures are many and varied and often contradictory. There is no possible way to accede to one group's demands and not alienate some other group. For example: How can we meet demands for new programs but avoid making requests for increased appropriations or higher student fees? How can we liberalize student behavior controls and supervision in dormitory operations, yet meet the expectations of the "over thirty" alumni and parents? How can we further develop the comprehensiveness of the University's programs, yet insure excellence and quality? How can we broaden opportunities for admission to the University, but maintain and extend academic standards? How can we upgrade the quality of instructional programs, but avoid deemphasizing research and public service? How can we maintain the values of a diverse student body, but avoid provincialism and make sure Missouri students are taken care of? How can we develop saleable professional skills, but avoid the narrow program emphasis of a trade school?

One may also ask — how can alumni help in times like these?

They can recognize that there are no simple solutions to the complex problems that confront today's University, be supportive of University administrators when their efforts merit it, and interpret to others the importance of the University and the significance of its contribution to society. And they can encourage the kind of support, financial and otherwise, a great institution requires. □