

By JOHN W. SCHWADA

# **Whose University?**

**B**y its very nature a university is likely to be in trouble.

Inevitably, it probes the edges of human knowledge. It explores new ideas. It looks for new approaches, for fresh solutions to old problems. And in this reaching out, a university will be the seat of some controversy.

Increasingly, it touches more lives. More persons are involved with it. The relationships which a university spawns become more and more complex. Throughout much of my lifetime, as a student and at least part of it as a faculty member and administrator, people have looked upon higher education as a sort of never-never land, off by itself in an ivory tower. If you went to college, you were a little bit different. Now, this is no longer the case. More than 50 per cent of our college age youth, nationally, are in college, and all segments of society regard the American university as the place to go to find the answers to many of society's problems. The university is looked upon as a vital part of the method by which a civilization maintains itself, renews itself, changes itself.

With this expanded role, what about the relationships of a university to the various publics of its community? What about these relationships at the University of Missouri? On the Columbia campus?

There is, of course, the relationship of the University (and its administration) to the students. We have more than 20,000 students on the Columbia campus. These young people are different from the students many of us remember in college. For one thing, they are brighter. They come from our high schools far better equipped than most of us did. But their modes of living, their modes of operation also are different. No longer is the University the second parent.

Many students are concerned, and in most cases properly so, about the structure of society, including the University. Not always are they constructive, however. Last month a group of graduate students in one division complained because we fired a secretary and hired a professor without consulting them, but in most cases, we have fine, concerned, reasonable student leaders. And we listen to them.

As one would suspect, parents take a particu-

lar interest in their students' University. They are concerned with how it is operated, with how it affects their children, with how their children are doing. At Columbia, parents seem to be particularly concerned with the size of the campus, with how well their offspring can cope in a community of 20,000 other students. We tell them that we do take a personal interest in that young man or woman, that we do make an effort to help that young person grow academically and personally. Their youngsters are not lost on the Columbia campus. They are, in fact, as well-equipped to adapt to a 20,000-student environment as we were to cope with a student body of 4000 or so.

The University's relationship with its faculty also is changing. When I was a student, faculty members often came to the University and found here a place to live and work all their lives. They became a part of the institution; they became a part of the community. And in many instances, they stayed here 30 years. Today, faculty members are mobile. They are in tremendous demand. There is tremendous competition for them. I can recall that when I started to teach in 1951 at the University of Missouri with a Ph.D, the starting salary was \$3800. I thought then that if I got up to \$4800, I could forget about the money business. Today we pay a new Ph.D in English, for example, something like \$7000 or \$8000. If his specialty is physics, mathematics, or engineering, the starting salary may be \$9000 or \$10,000. As a matter of fact we had a young man teaching for us just out of graduate school whom we were paying \$13,000 as a teacher. His second year a major Ivy League school hired him away for \$17,000.

The University, obviously, has an important relationship with its Board of Curators. This body, appointed by the governor, actually runs the University. It is not a rubber stamp for the administration. No college or university administrator always will agree with all the actions of his board, but the Curators represent the citizens of Missouri, and they are constitutionally charged with governing the University. And, of course, we work with them. They do a sincere, non-partisan, conscientious job.

One can well imagine the importance of the

University's relationship to the General Assembly. These legislators also represent the public, and as a public institution we depend on them for considerable financial assistance. It is important to point out that the University is tax assisted and not tax supported. Throughout the University's 130-year history, state appropriations never have provided more than half of its total operating revenues. But in any case, this state assistance is vital and this relationship a particularly vital one.

Since the citizens of Missouri do ultimately provide much of the funds for operating the University, it follows that the University must carefully nurture its relationship with the public. In fact, unless the University and the public are in close accord, unless the University is really servicing the public, it does not deserve to be called a public educational institution. If the University is not making this a better state economically, socially, politically, culturally — then it does not deserve public support.

Happily, we have through the Alumni Association, a two-way, dynamic relationship that is useful, both to the alumnus and to his Univer-

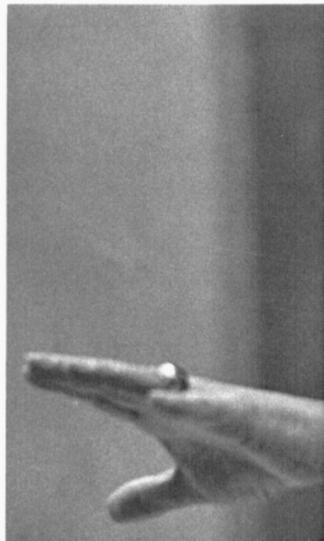
sity. This relationship must be a close, warm one, because if the University loses its alumni support — and not only from the private financial gift standpoint — then it has lost its base for all support — from the public, from the legislature, from corporations and foundations.

These relationships are not simple ones. They interact, one on the other, and often produce some interesting combinations. The student-teacher relationship is a familiar one, relatively easy to understand. But what about the student and the state legislature? Last month, the *Maneater*, the students' own newspaper on the Columbia campus, published student interviews with the president of the University, the governor of the state, and the president pro-tem of the Missouri Senate.

Of special interest here are the relationships the alumni have with these individual segments. Many alumni, of course, belong to several publics: There are alumni citizens, alumni parents, alumni legislators, alumni curators. But as alumni only, how do they relate?

Do alumni see students as irresponsible militants, making unrealistic demands, or do they

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really try to understand the great sensible majority and the forces affecting them? How do students regard the alumni? As the over-30 crowd? "The Graduate's" Mr. and Mrs. Robinson? Or as people who demonstrate real concern about the University and the world?

How about the parents? Do alumni groups make any special effort to include parents in their activities?

And what about the alumni and the faculty? Do alumni just write them off as impractical dwellers in ivory towers? Do faculty members view alumni as perennial cheerleaders whose only continuing interest in the University is 50-yard-line seats and a winning football season? Or can alumni and faculty gain respect for each other by working together in programs of support for the University.

In Missouri each Curator represents a geographical area. Does the typical alumnus know who his Curator is? Has he ever thanked his Curator for giving his time to the University? Has he told his Curator where he, as an alumnus, stands?

The legislator-alumnus relationship also can

be an important one. Does the individual alumnus talk to his senator and representative about the needs of the University? Does he support his legislator when his legislator supports him? Does the alumnus ever thank him? Can the legislator legitimately regard the alumnus as an informed, public spirited citizen, rather than a person who comes around only when he wants something?

And finally, how do the alumni relate to the general citizenry of their communities? They are the University in the eyes of the other citizens. How do the alumni measure up? As educated men and women? As informed men and women? As interested and concerned men and women?

Basically, what this is all about is alumni understanding of their University — their understanding, as educated men, of educated man. □

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*Chancellor John W. Schwada is a familiar voice on the Columbia campus alumni banquet circuit across the country. This article was adapted from talks he made to alumni groups at Tulsa, Okla., and Chillicothe, Mo.*

