



Missouri's President Weaver

A proud product of the Midwest, Dr. John C. Weaver comes to Columbia this summer to succeed President Elmer Ellis; he seeks a re-emphasis on the quality of teaching.

WHEN JOHN C. WEAVER comes to the University of Missouri as its new President this fall, he will bring with him a growing conviction that the balance between research and teaching in large universities has swung too far toward research. Accompanying that conviction will be a desire to swing the balance back toward teaching. This concern occupies him now as he rounds out his current administrative duties at the Ohio State University.

"A primary goal of the university is handing on the research torch to the next generation, but teaching is the first obligation of the university," Dr. Weaver has said on several occasions.

This is but one aspect of the educational philosophy of the strapping 50-year-old Midwesterner whose impressive credentials prompted his unanimous selection by the Board of Curators to succeed Dr. Elmer Ellis, who retires from the presidency at the end of August. During a nine-month search, 300 potential candidates were screened and about 100 were interviewed.

A friendly, outgoing personality, Dr. Weaver speaks with much understanding on the problems of education, especially as they apply to large state universities. He also talks enthusiastically on a variety of other subjects such as the Midwest, in which he feels great pride; geography, his professional field; and color photography, his hobby.

He is a product of the Midwest. Except for his World War II service as an intelligence officer attached to the Chief of Naval Operations, almost his entire career has been centered at Midwestern universities. His birthplace was Evanston, Illinois, in the shadow of Northwestern University. When he was two his family moved to Madison, Wisconsin, where his father became a long-time member of the faculty of the University of

Wisconsin and where Dr. Weaver earned three degrees and several honors. Later he taught geography at the University of Minnesota for ten years and became department chairman.

IN THE DECADE SINCE his teaching experience, Dr. Weaver has ascended the administrative ladder rapidly at four universities in the Midwest. He spent two years at Kansas State University, 1955-57, as dean of the Arts and Sciences School. The next four years he was dean of the Graduate School, University of Nebraska. Then there were three years at the State University of Iowa as dean of the Graduate School and vice-president for research. Since July, 1964, he has been at the Ohio State University, where he is vice-president for academic affairs and dean of faculties.

Before launching an academic career, Dr. Weaver was an editor and researcher for the American Geographical Society in New York in 1940-42, a job that soon meant securing ice flow data for the Department of State and the Navy during World War II. His charts of sea ice movements in the Northern Hemisphere, based on the records of many nations and many decades, are still used on all American ships.

Since Dr. Weaver is a Midwesterner by birth, education, and preference, it is not surprising that he considers the state universities of this region "the heart of American public higher education."

Asked why he had decided to accept the offer to become President of the University of Missouri, Dr. Weaver said:

"My whole life, as a student, faculty member and college administrative officer, has been identified with the public state university and, even more, the land-grant university of the Middlewest." He added: "The University of Missouri is my kind of university."

His father, the late Dr. Andrew T. Weaver, served 48 years on the faculty at the University of Wisconsin

The University's next President, genuinely interested in students, is shown chatting with a group of them on the Ohio State campus recently.



'He is an exceedingly well-qualified person.'

and was for 28 years chairman of the department of speech and theater arts.

"I was brought up in a faculty family on this kind of a university campus, the university born of a concept which I believe has been the most significant and uniquely American contribution to the philosophy of higher education."

DR. WEAVER MET HIS WIFE, the former Ruberta Louise Harwell, when she came to Wisconsin to do graduate work in his father's department. She was from Berkeley, California, where she had graduated from the University of California. "I converted my wife to being a Middlewesterner," Dr. Weaver boasts. They have two sons. Andrew, 19, who strums a guitar, sings with the tradition-rich Ohio State University men's glee club, and prefers to be called Andy, is a sophomore in engineering at Ohio State. The other son is 15-year-old Tom, a sophomore in high school, whose interests are debate and sports.

Present plans call for the Weaver family to come to Columbia early in August. The incoming president is deeply involved with academic programs on the Columbus campus and has only tentative plans for a quick spring visit to Missouri. Missouri officials look with favor upon his determination to stick to his present duties till the last moment.

Ohio State University leaders, making clear that they regret Dr. Weaver's decision to leave, apparently were resigned to that eventuality. President Novice G. Fawcett commented, "I congratulate Missouri officials on their selection of Dr. Weaver. I consider his leaving to be both an institutional and personal loss.

"He is an exceedingly well-qualified person to understand and articulate what a university is. He is an outgoing person who makes friends easily and works well with others."

John B. Fullen, Jr., director of alumni affairs at Ohio State, said: "He is a forceful, dynamic man with the wonderful combination of scholar and doer. It was inevitable that some university would grab him."

It is interesting to recall some of Dr. Weaver's observations after he had been on the Ohio State campus two months—comments that no doubt will be applicable at Missouri. In the course of an interview which appeared in the *Ohio State University Monthly*, Dr. Weaver said that coming to a new university has both its advantages and disadvantages.

"It's a disadvantage to have to mark time learning when a vital, complex university needs and wants action," he said. "On the other hand, there's an advantage in the fact that I don't have to carry a lot of history on my shoulders. I can approach problems from an unencumbered position and, with the advice of able colleagues, determine whether we have valid reasons for doing things in the old ways or whether we can move on to new designs."

At another point, he observed that problems among universities are similar. "The faces are different, the names are different, specific areas of weakness and strength come in different combinations, but the fundamental issues are pretty much the same in all state universities."

IN HIS PRESENT WORK, one of Dr. Weaver's major concerns has been the quality of teaching in the freshman and sophomore years. This concern is sure to remain uppermost in his mind when he moves into his office at Columbia.

"Every big state university has the tremendous problem of trying to deal with very large and rapidly growing numbers of students and still maintain educational opportunity for each individual," Dr. Weaver said recently.

At Ohio State where enrollment on the main campus is about double that of the Columbia campus, he found a large percentage of the finest teaching talent had been concentrated in areas of research and advanced edu-

The Feeling Is Mutual

I have known John Weaver for many years, and in my judgment Missouri is fortunate to have him as President of its University.

In fact, it was six years ago that I first recommended him for another position.

He is a dynamic leader in higher education, proved by experience in several universities similar to ours. I am completely confident that his administration will be marked by great achievement for all campuses of the University and by the state.—*Elmer Ellis.*

I consider it a difficult job, indeed, in having to follow a man who has done so much for the University. Over the years we have had a cordial association and I regard him with warm affection and admiring respect.

His footprints are large, and it will be extremely difficult to fill his shoes. But I will give my whole effort in doing the best I can to help lead the University forward.—*John C. Weaver.*

The University's next president with Mrs. Weaver, the former Ruberta Harwell, and their two sons—Tom, at left, and Andy.

'A university is here first to teach young people.'

cation, while far too large a part of the undergraduate teaching was left in the hands of less well qualified people.

He set out to improve the teaching at the freshman and sophomore levels—"Where the finest teaching is needed to capture the minds of those just getting a start in college"—and succeeded in bringing many top faculty members to those classrooms. One phase of the program is to bring graduate teaching assistants to the campus before school begins for four to six weeks of training in how to teach. He explained:

"We put the graduate students under the tutelage of experienced teachers so they can find out what are, in fact, the most important lines or threads of knowledge in their fields, and the most effective ways of delivering these to students."

Dr. Weaver, as a former graduate school dean, understands the important role of "scholarly work and research" at a university, but says:

"A university is here first and foremost to teach young people. We don't want to forget the undergraduate. These young people are the nation's most golden resource."

He observed that the vast size and impersonality of many universities are undoubtedly one reason for student unrest that has erupted into riots in a few places.

"A university campus is a reflection of the society that surrounds and supports it, and our society is in turmoil," he said. "I suppose there's some educational value in the fact that the turmoil does infiltrate the campus; after all, the university is trying to educate young people to live in that society."

"I don't think you can expect a campus always to be a place of peace and quiet. A university's purpose is not to give peace of mind and a sense of security. Education has to do with prodding and unsettling the mind and making it ask questions."

Dr. Weaver and the Alumni

In a taped interview, Dr. Weaver was asked questions dealing largely with alumni relations. Here are excerpts:

What will be your approach to your new post as president of the University of Missouri?

The approach will be that of many weeks and perhaps months of getting acquainted with the people, the campuses, the University and its traditions, and the state itself. I will need this background to develop in my own mind the vision of the unique opportunities and the problems of the University of Missouri and the state it serves. To arrive at appropriate responses to those problems and those opportunities, I will need, for a good many months, to spend more time listening than talking.

How can Missouri alumni, and the Alumni Association, be of help to you?

If they will give me the indulgent support and help that I think they will, they can do a good deal to make a stranger feel at home in a new land.

I come to the University of Missouri with the dedicated and devoted purpose of trying to bring some measure of the leadership to that great institution that I know the alumni feel it merits.

There are going to be many ways and many occasions where the alumni, as I find need to call on them for help, can assist me in getting acquainted, in getting the feel for the University, for its problems and its future.

Would you say the alumni will have an advisory role in the output of the University?

I think inevitably they do. I think it would be a poor university indeed that didn't reach out in creative and meaningful ways to involve its alumni in an advisory sense in its affairs. The manner in which that is accomplished is going to vary from institution to institution.

The alumni are, in a very important way, the carriers of the traditions of the university. A university has every reason to want to be proud of its alumni, just as the alumni have a very high stake in wanting to be proud of their university. What the alumni are like is a pretty fundamental reflection of what the university is like.

You have indicated you want to listen so you can learn. You probably don't want to carry the status quo indefinitely?

I think one can say with great validity that higher education has nothing to fear so much as the status quo. Universities, like other human institutions, often find it difficult to change, difficult to innovate, to find new ways of getting old purposes accomplished.

I think universities will have to create and protect the elbow room that makes it possible to adapt, to move swiftly, to be sure that we are accommodating the problems and the ways of life of the second half of the century.

We must have a flexibility of mind and a willingness to re-examine in order that we may lead young people forward to a meaningful life in a world that is changed.

Things are moving so rapidly that the status quo isn't standing still any longer. Status quo is running backward.



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IN RECENT INTERVIEWS, speeches and articles, Dr. Weaver has made clear his concern for the undergraduates. In an address before the American Surgical Association in Philadelphia, he said:

"All of our large and great universities have need in these days to re-examine their missions, their goals, and to reassess their means to their ends.

"Too many, too often, in too many places have, I would assert, forgotten that what *really* matters in higher education is young people, *individual* young people, and their *individual* minds.

"Let us resolve to seek attractive, indeed compelling encouragement, recognition, and then reward, for truly effective teaching.

"And, as we tend to recoil from the difficulties inherent in establishing the presence of superior distinction and commitment in teaching, let us be honest with ourselves and admit that there have been serious flaws in our judging the true quality of research, too."

Lest some think he would minimize the importance of research and creative activity, Dr. Weaver can point to his belief in, and devotion to, those fields. He won the national research award for his profession (Geography), served as graduate dean for seven years in two universities, was president of both of the national organizations of graduate schools, and has been a university vice-president for research.

"Research plays a prerequisite role in the life of a great university," he says. "I make no challenge to the validity of its presence.

"The prosecution of imaginative scholarship brings energizing stimulation to the vital teacher, it represents the indispensable element in the environment for graduate education, it serves society and brings renown to the university.

"Nonetheless, I carry an even more consuming conviction that what should worry us at least as much as the support and encouragement of research, is what are we bringing to the minds of thousands of students who represent our *first* line of responsibility."

Dr. Weaver has been on the M.U. campus several times, but not in recent years. The first occasion was in the 1930s when he came here as a Wisconsin U. debater. He was team captain in a successful debate with

the Missouri team. His other campus appearances here have been as speaker at the Honors College convocation and at a National Science Foundation meeting in 1959.

PRESIDENT ELLIS has known Dr. Weaver for seven or eight years and says he is delighted to have him as his successor. Dr. Ellis reaches the mandatory retirement age of 65 for administrative officers this summer, and August 31 will be his last day in office as president. The two men worked together closely in organizing the cooperative Mid-America State Universities Association, an organization similar to the Committee on Institutional Cooperation in the Big Ten, which Dr. Weaver has headed since he went to Ohio State.

As a student at the University of Wisconsin, Dr. Weaver won election to Phi Beta Kappa and was graduated with a major in geography in 1936. He took master's and doctor's degrees at Wisconsin in 1937 and 1942. He was also elected to Sigma Xi scientific fraternity, and won the Vilas medal for his record in debating and forensics.

Wide interests beyond his academic field are shown in scores of publications by Dr. Weaver. He is the author of publications on barley, on crop-combination regions in the Middlewest, and on livestock units. Other publications have dealt with such diverse subjects as the food crisis of humanity, American railroads, a design for research in the geography of agriculture, and federal aid to research and to universities. He has also written on hospital administration and contributed to the *Annals of Surgery*.

Dr. Weaver is a member of numerous professional organizations, and has held top office in several.

President Robert Neill of the Board of Curators headed the University Search Committee which recommended Dr. Weaver. His committee included two other Curators, William Billings of Kennett and Oliver B. Ferguson of Fredericktown. Other members were James A. Finch, Jr., of Jefferson City, justice of the Missouri Supreme Court and former Curator president who represented the alumni; and Dr. A. G. Unklesbay, chairman of the department of geology, who represented the combined faculty. □