State and Outlook of the University (opening dinner talk)

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STATE AND OUTLOOK OF THE UNIVERSITY

Introduction - "Generally speaking, ---"

If ever a state-of-the-university message was in order, it is now. I did this in an initial way for the new Taylor in April of 1965 under the title "Where the Goalposts Are." There have been many changes since then--both inside Taylor and out--all the way from remodeling Sammy Morris Hall to landing on the moon. Now the question stands in a larger context--many are asking what is the state of higher education in our society, or what is the state of our society in the world? How different can the world get between tonight and when our students are forty years old, with the load and the leadership on their backs and in their hands. So different that our imagination is probably quite inadequate. But it is for that world and that society that we are educating our students in 1969-70. How well do you think we are doing this?

Just the fact that a college keeps its doors open isn't proof of a quality educational experience for its students. Independent liberal arts colleges are among the more durable of our social institutions. Through more than three centuries they have survived and adapted to several major changes in society and in intellectual outlook and style, for example, the introduction of scientific studies into the liberal arts curricula and the industrialization of the 19th century. At this stage in history these colleges and universities have yet another major adaptation to
make if they are to remain viable and relevant, to use an overdone phrase.

As I speak of higher education generally, I do so with a view to comparing and analyzing the Taylor program, and subjecting it to your frank scrutiny and honest evaluation. There is often some disparity between the statements made by presidents and trustees and the first-hand knowledge of faculty and students about the real conditions of their college. When I was dean I used to needle the president by saying that a dean is the man who is working his head off trying to make and keep the college as good as the president and the development department are telling the alumni and donors that it is. This is not always a joke. Sometimes administrators, faculty, students and interested patrons are actually working at cross purposes and are thereby rendering leadership ineffective. At Taylor we have been analyzing our relationships and our communication in an attempt to understand each other and to serve each other as persons in our various roles in the educational enterprise in a Christian frame of reference. Have we done well enough? How can we do better?

In many institutions where changes have taken place, they have been largely unplanned and unrelated to the central purposes of the college. They are precipitated more by, e.g., new federal legislation makes matching funds available for instructional facilities, often representing needs of low priority; or an unexpected gift with strings attached makes possible a new program which may have little connection with the aims and objectives of the institution; or a tax-supported community college is established nearby and threatens the drawing power for students;
or a crisis in relations with students occurs and must be resolved.

At least a part of the reason for this is that the long-range planning for the institution and the program is either undone altogether or is so unclear and obscure that the day by day or year by year movements of the college are subject to the pressures which happen to be current and strongest at the moment. In other words, the long-range planning has not been adequate to serve as a guide for daily decision-making.

Now, long-range planning is subject to many hazards. It is difficult in the sense that one is always doing the work of his successors, and this is less romantic than the thrill of immediate achievement. Another problem is the danger that the plan for a university's future, at whatever stage of clarity and definiteness, may exist mainly in the mind of one man or a few persons and be quite unknown or at least unclear to other members or components of the academic community. Again, whatever plan there is may be either too unflexible to unfold with the changing needs of the times or, on the other hand, not solid enough to furnish guidelines for the decision-making process of current operations. The latter characterizes the last two decades of higher education in most institutions.

I am not claiming that Taylor is the perfect exception. But I want to share with you where we are and seek with you the ways and means by which to move forward, both with the planning and with the implementation. During the summer the administration and some of the trustees have given much thought to
the Taylor plan which has guided the program, especially during the past five years.

The plan for Taylor must be consistent with our fundamental concept of whole-person education. This is the Taylor plus, recognized by all our publics, and the raison d'être of our existence and survival. Accordingly, it includes intellectual, physical, social and spiritual aspects. I assure you that we and student affairs personnel have been giving thought to the social and spiritual aspects. I'm sure you are all aware of the recent and continuing examination of the academic program and curriculum offerings. This summer we and development personnel have scrutinized the physical facilities expression of the whole-person educational philosophy, with a re-examination of the ten-year projections we made in 1965.

Let me now review the state-and-outlook of the Taylor program, beginning with the most visible, the facilities.

Last fall the dedication of the Science Center concluded the first main phase of the ten-year plan. This enabled us to increase enrollment from 850 to almost 1400. It has also placed us in a position in which we are committed to proceed as rapidly as we can with the second and third phases. This is not because we are anxious to become larger, but because we know how urgent it is to have an adequate library, chapel-auditorium, and fine arts and physical education facilities to serve the students at the present enrollment level. So we are working, both harder and smarter, we hope, to complete the physical plant that would serve 1800 to 2000 students.
In addition to these major brick-and-mortar elements of the plan, several more immediate parts of the program may be cited. We are grateful for the transformation of Morris Hall, into an attractive and fitting element of the total campus. It is even planned for possible conversion into an academic facility if and when all residence is ultimately removed to the south campus. A feasibility study reveals that MCW residence hall cannot be considered a permanent facility beyond five to ten years.

My July bulletin of information announced the approval by federal Housing and Urban Development of our application for funds to provide a new food service center down by the campus lake. This is logical, in view of the concentration of housing on the lake-side of the campus, and because of the inadequate size and quality of the present facility. Hats off to Bill Davis and others who worked like trojans to submit our application by a March 31 deadline, and for a June 30 notification date. The telephone call came on July 1. Nothing could have been said in advance, especially in light of the fact that the funding provided HUD was adequate for only about a third of the 1969 applications from colleges and universities. That a two-part application, including housing for 96 students, was approved for Taylor is a tribute to the public image of our program, to the work of our own vice presidents, to Birch Bayh, Richard Roudebush, George Romney with whom we and some of our trustees are well acquainted. So we will proceed with plans for construction to begin during this academic year, while we also move forward in
our efforts to find gifts and arrange financing for a library and chapel-auditorium. 

So much for physical facilities—at least until question time.

In the more intangible aspects of the program, I have several observations. Let me boast a little about you people and your work. Walter F. Berns, a Cornell professor until his recent resignation in protest of the university's handling of student uprisings, writes about "radical students and rattled colleges" and says, "There is, of course, another way, and there are students who know it. There are students fortunate enough to be in a university where the ancient questions of philosophy and theology are honestly and seriously treated and occupy a central place in the curriculum, and where there are teachers who can, by their teaching and by their examples, show the best-endowed students of the existence of a meaningful world away from both the barricades and the world of the organization man."

Indiana University conducted a survey of 1,769 college and university campuses relative to "significant change" in governance. One sentence in the report reads, "significant change last year occurred most readily on eastern, private, campuses of under 5000 students."

We are, of course, under 5000 enrollment, we are independent rather than tax-supported, and, if we are not eastern, we are east-mid-west. And we do qualify as the kind of university that Dr. Berns said some students are fortunate enough to know about—the kind that includes the historical basics in the curriculum, and that has teaching and example oriented people. This is my boast.
We have been able to effect changes here at Taylor. All components of the university have cooperated in a very heartening way. We have not yet accomplished all of the needed change. But there are some things we hope will remain stable, and perhaps change only for the improvement of their quality. Some of these are in the non-physical aspects of the program. E.g., I hope we will never share the current feeling on the part of so many people that, because we are in a world of rapid change, history is the most irrelevant of all subjects. I am not now speaking only of the department of history but even more of the perspective of history. How unfortunate if we lose, or if some fail to learn, a sense of history. Think for a moment: if the cumulative total of man's recorded past experience is not relevant to today's problems, how quickly will any discussion of only today's problems become irrelevant to the changing prospects of tomorrow? It's like the youth who shouts about not trusting anyone over thirty, then feels the days and the weeks and the years between twenty and thirty slipping by so fast that he is soon on the side that doesn't count anymore. And where is that line? The Students for a Democratic Society is a college-age organization. Recently they have been trying to organize chapters on high school campuses. Following one meeting a high school junior said, "I don't know if we can trust them or not—they're so old." Well, I need only remind you that "those who will not read history are doomed to repeat it." And "he who does not respect the past must not be trusted with the future."
I used the historical perspective as an example. My own commitment is equally to an emphasis on human and personal values. You, a teacher; you, a trustee; you, a student; you are important to me. If I were to describe my philosophy of administration in the fewest possible words it would be leadership through sharing.

My reason for wanting to improve the physical conditions of my office is not so much to provide more comfort for me as to make you more comfortable. I hope it will be a better place for us to share in leadership as the occasion permits. I believe we must face together, each in his own role, the objective conditions under which Taylor University operates—budget, student clientele, social role, spiritual purpose, intellectual excellence—and develop programs which are appropriate to these goals and conditions. I believe we can do it with a sense of common purpose and that everyone of you can help in promoting the welfare of the university community and the educational experience. I acknowledge our responsibility to inform and to communicate, and also to provide the opportunity for trustee and teacher and student expression. I believe that essentially orderly discussion and action are better than disruption and violence, and I believe these are the best antidotes to trustee or faculty or student alienation. It is easy to allow deterioration of relationships; I am committed to the harder task of communication and education in a context of mutual respect and confidence. I am asking for your support, your help and your advice—in other words, total involvement and universal participation, each in his role, and all for Taylor.