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ABSTRACT

Federal-school relations are more than financial; other factors are basic to junior college governance. As higher education shapes our society more strongly, the federal role becomes more visible. Many historical influences have formed the national character--notably a steady rise in the education level. Increased religious and social pluralism and less isolationism have also affected social mobility; status is now judged by skill or knowledge. The government has long fostered this situation by aiding post-secondary schools. The Manpower Development and Training Act and the Higher Education Facilities Act have enabled 2-year colleges to meet some needs of the increased population. As federal aid grows, however, so does its influence on local power structures, overriding institutions based on family, economic, and racial factors and bringing increased guarantees of human rights, more education, and social justice. Considering these issues, the 2-year college must adapt to a pluralistic approach, to community interests rather than to self or special interests. Faculty selection, community and industrial needs, social and athletic programs, academic and vocational courses must all be balanced and the impact of federal money on any one of them noted. Legislation and funds must be directed to developing human resources. Board, administration, and faculty can help by staying attuned to international, national, and community issues and to the proper federal function in education. (HH)

THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGE AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT-- ISSUES AND DIRECTIONS

by Louis C. Vaccaro

This nation's two-year colleges are experiencing many of the same pressures and problems facing most other institutions of higher education in these demanding times. It is, therefore, not surprising that they are involved with many of the same government agencies in attempting to reach solutions to these problems. What is not surprising, however, is the fact that few persons have a clear understanding of the community college's relation with the federal government.

Indeed, whenever one hears the phrase, "federal/school relations" the almost automatic response is to consider the topic soley in terms of "federal aid to education." Moreover, the topic of federal aid to education is usually treated by experts, critics and others who consider the subject as one of 'crisis' proportions. However, the many related facets of the issue receive scant attention from those who profess interest in the topic.

I believe the subject has much wider implications than merely the "federal aid" aspect -- though, clearly, this aspect is prominent in any treatment of the federal government's relation to education. Most writings on the topic generally include an extensive presentation of statistics

and tables regarded as necessary to illustrate the pervasiveness of federal involvement in educational affairs. This treatment, by contrast, will rely, instead, on analysis and discussion of the more subtle questions which ultimately arise and provide the basis for decisions on the part of those responsible for the governance of community colleges and other institutions of higher education.

In discussing the federal government's relation to the community college -- or, the two-year college, as it is sometimes called -- I will periodically discuss higher education as a whole, not because I wish to confuse the reader but because the topic of the community college's relationship with the federal government cannot be adequately treated nor fully understood outside the total perspective of higher education. More specifically, I will address my remarks to the federal government's role in shaping and giving direction to American society, and particularly, the function higher education plays in giving force to such direction. All this is to say that higher education is becoming an increasingly potent force in shaping American society and that the federal government, as an ever growing factor in that force, has a definite, albeit not yet thoroughly understood, role to perform.

The Shape and Direction of American Society

There are main trends which are commonly identified as

characterizing the profound changes which have occurred in the development of the American character.[1]

They are:

1) The population movement from east to west.
2) The change from rural-agrarianism to urban industrialism.
3) The shift from isolationism to internationalism.

These trends have had a profound and lasting affect on the shaping of American society; what happened fifty to one hundred years ago still exerts a strong influence on the present shape of an individual or collective organism.

What is more difficult to recognize, however, is that there are equally important processes just as surely exerting influence on the development of the American character. Such processes are not as apparent as the previously mentioned three; but, it is nonetheless, possible to discern their influence. What are some of these factors and what implications do they have for our topic? Although such influences are difficult to analyze, some attention must be devoted to them to fully understand their implications.

One of the most profound factors which has exerted and continues to exert a strong influence on the shaping of the American character is the steady increase in the level of education which has been achieved in the past half century. In the year 1900 less than two percent of American youth attended college; by 1970 nearly fifty percent of college age youth are expected to enroll in institutions of higher education.[2]

One need not consult the experts to realize the profound implications such an achievement has for social class mobility, industrial development and the relative increase in earnings of the rising lower and middle income groups. This increase in earnings and in educational levels in turn has profoundly affected the attitudes of those who have attained them, regarding the place and function of the federal government in American society. Higher educational achievements and affluence have been accompanied by greater awareness by these persons of the forces and factors affecting economic development (and poverty) and the need for public regulatory agencies to insure just and equitable treatment of all citizens in a particular society. Whereas our grandparents might have regarded it as unthinkable that the federal government would carry out a program of general retirement benefits -- we, today, are discussing the possibilities and actually carrying out the similar programs for medical, dental, and other related needs. And, whereas the average citizen in 1900 never would have considered as attainable the proposition that every eighteen year old should obtain a high school education, today we are thinking in terms of providing opportunities for a college education for all qualified youth. This shift in social thinking is difficult to comprehend unless one studies the values inherent in what has been a successful attempt to increase the educational level of the masses.

Another factor strongly influencing the shape of American society is the profound advances which have been made in the attainment of religious and national pluralism. Though it may be true that we were at one time an isolationist country and that we were, for all intent and purposes, protestant oriented, such is not the case today. Two world wars and the cold war, plus a few police actions, have placed the United States squarely in the mainstream of worldwide economic and political activity. Like it or not, we are a world power with all the attendant responsibilities and perils the title implies.

The attainment of religious and national pluralism have their roots in a strong sense of equalitarianism which has flourished in America since the earliest days of the founding of this republic. To fully understand this development, it is important to identify the reasons for the emergence of such trends. The traditional bases of success and status which were so much a part of our European heritage were slow to give way in America, but they were ultimately replaced by earned achievement and knowledge. In fact, the escalator of social mobility has replaced the private entrance to status, achievement and power. Education, then, has become a strong force in shaping the American character by replacing status achieved by social standing and parentage with status through achievement based on expertise, skill, and knowledge.

The federal government played a very vital role in allowing for the development of this dominant idea in America -- not only in the area of elementary and secondary education but in higher education as well. From the Land Grant Act of 1862 to the present, the federal government has steadily increased its activities with respect to granting aid to institutions of higher education with the avowed purpose of permitting a broader cross-section of the population to achieve a post-high school education. The gradual result has been that ability has replaced position as the main determinate in securing jobs and positions, though clearly, the non-white portion of the population still has some distance to go to achieve non-discriminatory consideration. Nevertheless, the effects of other federal programs and laws, combined with the liberalized educational system, are helping to rectify this situation.

The Two-year College and The Federal Government

What does all this have to do with the two-year college in twentieth century America? What effects have the federal programs in higher education had on the shape and direction of the community college? And what issues face the two-year college as a consequence?

There was little direct involvement of the federal government with the two-year colleges until the early 1960's. The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1961 and the

Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963 are the two most notable federal programs which do bear upon the two-year college movement.

Early in 1960, perceptive legislators realized that the manpower problems which had been allowed to build up and which were creating pockets of poverty in many sections of the country, were not being adequately faced by the local or state governments. The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1961 prompted some of the public two-year colleges to organize training programs suited to the surrounding industrial needs. Many two-year colleges, however, did not respond so positively, and the results of their ineffective response are still being felt.[3] However, since then, the boards of control and administrations of most two-year colleges have exhibited a greater awareness of the national educational needs and as a consequence have added to the stature and strength of the individual colleges. For example, there has been an enthusiastic response by trustees and administrators to the legislation proposed and finally passed in 1963 as the Higher Education and Facilities Act -- legislation which is permitting the two-year colleges, along with most other institutions of higher education, to meet the urgent needs pressed on them by the post-war population surge. Without this significant financial help, many community colleges would be hard pressed to find the resources to provide needed staff, space, and programs.

The opposition to massive federal aid which the NEA leaders and other public education officials maintained during the 1950's (over the point of church/state relations), was finally withdrawn in the early 1960's so that aid under the facilities legislation could become available for church related institutions as well as non-church related schools. Such action says a great deal for the increasing sophistication of the emerging leadership within the community college movement. Those trustees and administrators who do not see the broader significance of post-high school opportunities are slowly diminishing in numbers and are being replaced by persons of broader vision and awareness. Such vision and awareness is generally recognized as indespensible for the successful fulfillment of the role educational institutions will play in shaping the character of American society. Sydney W. Tiedt analyzes this point, in greater detail, in his recent book, The Role of the Federal Government In Education:

> The federal aid story might be examined in terms of WHO gets WHAT, WHEN, AND WHY? WHO in this case, has included institutions of higher education, vocational agricultural education, and, most recently, federally affected communities.
>
> The WHAT was originally the land grant, which later evolved into the matching of funds as land became more scarce. In general, we note that specific grants have been favored by Congress. A recent example is the National Defense Education Act, which first focused on assistance to mathematics, science, and modern foreign languages.
>
> WHEN has usually occurred during a war or national evergency. The Morrill Act, for example,

was enacted during the Civil War. The Smith-Hughes Act was passed during the First World War, the Lanham Act during World War II, and the Federal Impact Laws during the Korean War. Finally, the National Defense Education Act resulted from the Cold War.

WHY has federal aid been thought necessary? It has usually been the result of reaction to inadequacies in our educational system. These inadequacies have been pointed up, in many cases, by the draft rejection statistics. A theme that runs through many of the acts and bills, therefore, is that of wiping out illiteracy. Another theme is that of equality of opportunity in education. This problem has been examined in terms of broadening the curriculum through, for example, land-grant colleges, which provided vocational education, and in terms of equalizing educational opportunity of a geographic basis.

It should be noted further, that education has been used historically to solve many problems, but not until recently has education been considered a problem in itself. This point is brought out in the examination of the federal aid activities of the present and in an analysis of trends that will influence future legislation.[4]

It is almost impossible to predict what the level of future federal financial aid will be. Considering the whole of higher education the predictions range anywhere from $8.4 billion to over $12 billion annually by 1970 to figures greatly beyond that by 1974-75.[5] It is clear, however, that the precedent of federal aid is firmly established and will continue to be used as a basis for treating higher education as a national resource.

This is not to say that important problems and issues will not arise as a consequence of such increasing federal aid. There is no illusion that there is complete public agreement as to the federal government's involvement in fi-

nancing higher education in this country. But, an important point to keep in mind is that workable agreements can only be reached when all elements are allowed to speak out and when full debate regarding possible consequences is allowed to develop. It is in the best interests of all citizens, as well as educational institutions, to join in such dialogue. Even ruling out the religious question resolved in the Maryland Court case, leaves other and equally difficult issues to face.

The problem of federal aid to church related institutions is related to another significant issue which has been developing for the past two or three decades -- but most rapidly since the late 1950's. It has to do with the changing pattern of decision making in local communities. The term "community power structure" has been aptly applied to the highly structured relationships operating within given communities which heretofore have been calling the tune with little organized opposition from the minority groups. However, since the increasing effectiveness of the civil rights campaign, the freedom rides, the sit-ins, and mass student movements, the old structures based on family influence, economic self-aggrandizement and racial inequalities are beginning to give way to a truly pluralistic approach. To be sure, the tide has not yet turned completely. The 'old guard' is still in command with respect to controlling answers

to the question: who gets what, where, and when? but, the influence of the previously unorganized power groups in community life is beginning to be felt. This increasing influence has resulted from greater governmental involvement in guaranteeing basic human rights; the increased level of education attained by the lower socio-economic groups since World War II; and not insignificantly, the increasing social awareness of the younger segment of our population.[6]

It is precisely in the consideration of these issues that the community college can ask itself whether it will opt for conditions which will permit a more pluralistic approach in the settling of community questions or whether it will allow itself to be directed by the established, self-aggrandizing power groups. This question not only touches upon the rightful responsibilities of boards of trustees but members of the administration and faculty as well. For it seems that if the two-year college is to fulfill its claim to being an 'open door' college, an institution which would allow everyone to compete in the process of social mobility, it must take its cues not from groups with restrictive self interests but from the total community condition. This kind of responsiveness to the overall community needs will be reflected in how the president, academic dean, chairman of the board and other administrators react

to requests by community and industrial leaders for additions or modifications in the curriculum. It also has many implications for the structuring of social and athletic programs, the recruitment and selection of faculty and other matters related to the operation of a true community college. For example, if pressure is exerted to expand non-academic programs at the expense of achieving true academic excellence, and such pressure is bowed to without the pluralistic involvement of all persons concerned, the result is a clear sellout to self-interest groups.

The whole issue of federal involvement, viz a viz support for research and training programs in institutions of higher education, is one that will demand increasingly difficult decisions. On the one hand, it is clearly recognized that the monies available for such programs might not be available from other sources; yet the implications such support may have for the direction and emphasis of the colleges' programs are too important for such monies to be accepted without conscious awareness on the part of trustees and administrators. At a recent conference for school board members, Ross W. Amspoker, a board member of a California community college called for a national "voice" for the nation's junior community colleges which have become a potent force in United States' educational circles. He stated that ". . . these schools need to have a say in determining federal legislation

and fund allocations affecting their future."[7] It seems to me that more of this type of perception and dialogue is what is needed if continued upgrading of community college education is to be achieved.

Future Directions and Issues Related to Existing Federal/College Relations

What directions and issues are likely to develop as a consequence of the existing federal/community college relations? And related to this question, what decisions will have to be faced as a consequence of such directions and issues? Present federal/community college relations are minimal when contrasted with what will likely emerge in the future. With over nine million young people expected to enroll in colleges and universities by 1974-75 it is clear that the community colleges will be inundated with students presenting themselves for post-high school education. The patterns emerging in such states as California, New York, Florida, and Michigan indicate that by 1974-75 the majority of this nation's freshmen and sophomores will be enrolled in two-year colleges with the four-year institutions and universities catering to the needs of upper division, professional, and graduate education.

Such enrollments will cause heavy burdens for the local communities (particularly those least able to withstand the costs) in attempting to increase their facilities to care for them. With community colleges competing for qualified

faculty, costs will undoubtedly continue to increase. And those communities most in need of a post-high school institution may well find it impossible to attract the quality faculty necessary for the development of viable programs. Some help from outside the local community is needed to break the strangle hold caused by low educational levels and poor economic development.

The present trends in federal financing would seem to indicate that additional and wider bases of support will be forthcoming from the federal government to ease the burden. No doubt this will further intensify the debate regarding federal control of educational policy. But the issues must be faced. Defacto, the increased aid will merely be an extension of an existing principle: redistribution of the financial resources which presently exist in disproportion to the needs of American society. However, we should view this action in light of one small but important value change which has taken place in the past decade. The American public has finally recognized the proposition that human resources are more important than other resources in twentieth century America. It is senseless to let such important resources remain uncultivated when the only obstacle in the way of their development are proper educational programs. The solution which presents itself is elementary -- rearrange the financial and educational resources so that

the more important human resources may be developed and properly utilized.

To be sure, much opposition will continue to be raised against such seemingly un-American practices. Many individuals and self-interest groups will undoubtedly attempt to 'prove' a leftist dominated plot or a similarly related un-American activity. And this is the point at which the community college administrators and board members will need to demonstrate their mettle and perception, realizing that their decisions and views will eventually affect the stature and integrity of this country's involvement in other parts of the world. For example, to say to the world that the underprivileged in foreign countries should be allowed to fulfill their capacities while denying such fulfillment to the underprivileged in American communities is working at cross purposes with one's goals. Or, to speak of responsible involvement of individuals and countries in civic and national affairs but yet fail to provide the experiences for such involvement in post-high school education is also, it seems, inconsistent.

If the community college is ever to fulfill its rightful role as a true partner in the higher educational enterprise, it will do so as a consequence of the actions and leadership exhibited by the faculty, administration, and board members responsible for their direction. To this end the president

of the community college, as its educational leader, has the highest responsibility to become informed about basic international, national, and community issues and, most particularly, to remain perceptive to the function of the federal government in American education. He must, in addition, not fail to raise his voice when necessary nor fail to encourage his staff and faculty to do likewise when called for. Only in this way will the two-year college in America fulfill its crucial role and live out its usefulness as an indispensable ingredient in this nation's quest for educational excellence.

Footnotes

1) Louis C. Vaccaro, The Private College and the American Heritage, The Quarterly of the American Interprofessional Institute, Winter 1965-66, p. 6.

2) Dael Wolfle, Americas Resources of Specialized Talent, (New York: Harper, 1954), p. 24.

3) Angus Campbell, William C. Eckerman, "Public Concepts of the Values and Costs of Higher Education," Monograph No.57, 1964. Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

4) For a fuller discussion of this point see Clyde Blocker's, The Two-Year College: A Social Synthesis, (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1965), p. 72-73.

5) E. L. Morphet, C. O. Ryan, Implications for Education of Prospective Changes in Society, (Denver, Colorado, Designing Education for the Future, 1967).

6) See Sydney W. Tiedt's, The Role of the Federal Government In Education, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 31-32.

7) For a fuller treatment of these points see Floyd Hunter's Community Power Structure, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953) and C. Wright Mills', The Power Elite, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

8) Quoted in The Sunday Oregonian, April 23, 1967, Portland, Oregon.

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