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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire was sent to the 7 state agency directors, 61 college presidents, and 61 college board chairmen of public two-year colleges that had established statewide agencies since 1968, and had institutional boards in existence prior to the state agency, to determine their perceptions of the changes in the powers and duties of college boards as a result of state coordination. Responses were received from 6 state directors, 43 college presidents, and 25 board chairmen. The survey results indicated that: (1) in the majority of states reporting, the state-level agencies regulated only public two-year colleges; (2) the basis of authority for the state and institutional boards existed in statutory provisions in the majority of cases; (3) institutional boards governed the local colleges; (4) the size of the state and institutional boards varied from state to state; (5) the majority of the institutional boards were elected by the public; a sizable number of institutional boards were filled, however, by gubernatorial appointment; (6) the length of terms of institutional board members varied from 3 to 7 years; (7) in the majority, there was no limit on the number of consecutive terms that a board of trustee member could serve; and (8) only geographic considerations were made to assure representatives in the institutional board of trustees in most cases. (DB)

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EFFECTS OF STATE COORDINATION UPON TWO YEAR

COLLEGE BOARDS OF TRUSTEES

In 1960 there were 405 public two year colleges enrolling 566,224 students. In 1974 there were 1165 public two year colleges enrolling 3,144,643 students.[1] During this period the public two year college evolved from a rather minor portion of American higher education to become an important segment of public higher education.

The Carnegie Commission report of 1970 best outlined the reasons for the increased popularity of public two year colleges. In that report open admission, low tuition, a geographic distribution among many states, a greater variety of programs for a greater variety of students, the provision of an opportunity for higher education for those not interested in four year degrees, and the provision of continuing education for working adults proved the worth of public two year colleges.[2]

Traditionally the public two year college had been governed only by local boards of trustees. The advantage of local boards of trustees was that local trustees were generally more responsive to local needs. The situation of local colleges being governed solely by local trustees flourished and worked reasonably well for more than fifty years. However, during the late 1950's and early 1960's, the public two year college movement began to blossom. During the 1960's the number of public two year colleges more than doubled, and student enrollment increased fivefold. This tremendous influx of students, and the nearly continuous opening of new two year colleges, increased the operational and captial expenses of these colleges far beyond the capability of local tax units. The two most obvious sources of needed funds were the state legislatures and the federal Congress. Primarily, the two year colleges turned to the state legislatures.

As bewildered state legislators were faced by increasing numbers of college presidents, deans and board members, they (the legislators) issued a cry for help. The legislators wanted to alleviate the competition for state funds, avoid expensive program duplication, assure that all needed services were provided, meet the need for long range planning, and finally, acquire help from professionals in making the correct decisions. In order to accomplish these goals, legislators and governors turned increasingly to state-level agencies to regulate the public two year colleges and to give advice regarding the development of the colleges.

The move toward state coordination or governance of public two year colleges has nearly been completed in all fifty states. Thus, institutions that had originally met the local needs have become so important to the welfare of all people that states no longer can afford not to regulate their activities. The move toward state coordination resulted in confusion over who actually possessed the power to operate the institutions. This confusion has been exhibited in recent publications on the subject.

The confusion over state coordination of two year colleges coupled with the lack of previous research regarding the effects of state coordination upon public two year colleges boards led the Department of Higher Education of Indiana University to develop a research project on the subject.

In the initial stage of the study, the states which had established state-wide agencies for public two year colleges since 1968 and which had institutional boards in existence prior to the imposition of the state agency were ascertained.

Forty-four state agency directors in forty-three states (Connecticut had two agencies) participated in this phase of the study.

RESULTS OF PHASE ONE

Forty-one responses were received. These responses indicated that eight states fit the parameters of Phase One. However, Indiana was eliminated because there was only one public two year college with its own board of trustees in the state. Also, Indiana was not surveyed because no full-time director was employed by the state agency during the time the study was conducted. The remaining seven states were California, Colorado, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, South Carolina and Wyoming. A total of sixty-one public two year colleges were selected for participation in the study.

PHASE TWO

After the completion of the initial phase of the study a questionnaire was sent to the seven state agency directors, sixty-one college presidents and sixty-one college board chairmen to ascertain their perceptions of the changes in the powers and duties of college boards resulting from state coordination. The questionnaire used in the second phase of the study had two sections. The first section sought specific background information regarding when the state boards were established, the size of the state and institutional boards, the method of selection of board members, etc. The second section included a checklist of functions typically exercised by institutional boards of trustees. The participants were asked to indicate in separate columns if institutional boards exercised a specific function prior to state coordination, after state coordination, or not at all. Thirty-two functions were listed under six general functional areas. These were curriculum, educational policy, finance, facilities, personnel, and research.

Six state directors, forty-three college presidents, and twenty-five college board chairmen responded to the questionnaire. The seventh state director sent a copy of state legislation relating to the powers and duties of the state agency and institutional boards.

RESULTS OF PHASE TWO

The observations made from the results of the survey indicated that all seven states surveyed had established state level agencies for regulating the activities of public two year colleges.

A large majority of the participants reported that state-level agencies regulated only public two year colleges. Only in Montana was the state agency responsible for all higher education.

A majority of the participants reported that the basis of authority for the state and institutional boards existed in statutory provisions.

A majority of the participants indicated that institutional boards governed the local colleges. A number of respondents from Colorado indicated that state-system community and technical colleges were governed by the state board with the institutional boards serving in an advisory capacity. A number of participants from South Carolina reported that the relationship between the state and institutional board was still being defined.

The size of the state and institutional boards varied from state to state. State boards ranged in size from seven to fifteen members and institutional boards ranged in size from five to thirteen members.

It was reported that a majority of the institutional boards were elected by the public; however, a sizeable number of institutional boards were filled by gubernatorial appointment.

The length of terms for institutional board members varied with the shortest being three years and the longest seven years.

In a large majority of cases there was no limit on the number of consecutive terms which could be served by a board of trustee member. It was noted, however, by some respondents from Maryland that as of July 1, 1974, a limit of two consecutive terms would be established.

In a majority of cases the participants reported that only geographic considerations were made to assure representativeness in the institutional board of trustees. A sizeable minority of participants indicated that no provisions had been made to assure representative boards.

By their responses to the checklist of functions and to the final open ended question, the state agency directors had indicated:

1. In the states surveyed, the state boards had developed or were developing, in cooperation with institutional boards, a set of general policies with which institutional board policy must at least be consistent.

2. In nearly every state surveyed, new academic programs must at least be reviewed at the state level.

3. In nearly every state surveyed, standardized accounting procedures had been developed to make state-level review of budget request easier.

4. The new guidelines and accounting procedures required more reporting to the state agency by the institutions.

Responding to the same two sections, the college president indicated:

1. The institutional boards had lost considerable control over curricular functions as a result of state coordination. This loss hampered the boards in attempting to respond quickly to meet local needs.

2. The institutional boards had lost considerable control over financial management as a result of state coordination.

3. Presidents spent more time completing reports to be sent to the state level agency.

4. Much more "red tape" was required to obtain approval for a new program or a budget request. This made it more difficult to respond to local needs.

5. Standardized accounting procedures assured that when budgetary requests were made that those considering the request would be speaking the same language as those who had prepared the budget.

The responses of the institutional board chairmen to these two portions of the study indicated:

1. Except in the area of finance, the institutional board exercised nearly all functions after state coordination that it had exercised before state coordination.

2. More "red tape" was involved in obtaining state approval for new academic programs or increased appropriations.

3. State coordination had stifled the development of new programs for fear that new programs may have resulted in a lessening of financial support for existing programs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions were based on the findings of the study:

1. The creation of state agencies for coordinating public two year colleges does change the powers and duties of institutional governing boards which existed prior to the creation of the state agencies.

2. State agency directors, college presidents, and institutional board chairmen have differing perceptions of the nature of the changes that have occurred, but these differing perceptions appear to be a result more of differing perceptions than of actual confusion concerning what has happened.

3. State directors tend to see their roles as facilitating and advisory more than controlling.

4. The presidents perceptions of state coordination of two year colleges tend to be affected by the presidents need to be aware of the faculty role in institutional governance.

5. The board chairmen perceptions tend to be affected by the traditional roles that boards have seen for themselves, with emphasis on finances and facilities. Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect board members to have significant perceptions of changes wrought by the creation of state agencies, since boards have to and probably should depend primarily on their presidents for the information they get.

6. The changes that have occurred as a result of the impostion of state agencies influencing already existing two year college boards are most evident in terms, first, of finances and facilities and, second, in terms of broad curricular controls, p rily in inhibiting the development of new programs. Broad personnel policies, such as tenure provisions, may be expected to demand serious consideration at an early date.

The following recommendations are based on the findings and conclusions of the study.

1. State coordinating agencies and institutional boards of trustees should cooperate fully in the development of broad policy statements which define state agency functions to allow for considerable independence for institutional boards of trustees.

2. Institutional boards of trustees should be given considerable freedom to develop academic and vocational programs to meet the needs of the district served by the college.

3. The appropriation of state funds for operational expenses should be based on broad formulas.

4. State agencies and institutional boards should cooperate in the development of a facility master plan in order to assure provision of adequate facilities.

5. Individual colleges should continue conducting research to ascertain college and community needs with assistance from the state agency.

6. Research regarding long-range planning should be conducted jointly by the institutional boards and state agencies.

7. A study should be conducted to ascertain whether increased state control accompanies increased proportions of state financial support.

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[1]1974 Community and Junior College Directory

[2]Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, The Open-Door Colleges, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1970.