

of the university. After all, the presidency is not about me, my opinions and my view of the new world order. I consider it inappropriate to think I might somehow represent the political views of all the people who work and learn on our campus. My job is to lead, prod, excite and push the university to a better future: higher quality, more efficient, more responsive, more diverse and better funded—and in the process to protect and guarantee its academic integrity. When people ask me what my job is, I always say, “To make the University of Southern Maine an even better university.”

When the day comes that I want to jump up on the bully pulpit and advocate clear and strong positions,

I will run for office or return full time to the faculty. Until then I will take seriously the responsibility of representing all the voices and views on campus, and to work as hard as I can to move this university forward on its journey towards our stated goal of “regional excellence, national recognition.” To do otherwise would abuse the opportunity I have been given and would undermine the broad stewardship responsibility that is inherent in the role of the 21st century public university president.

Richard Pattenau is president of the University of Southern Maine.

Declaring Independence

A New Model for Public Presidents

ROBERT L. CAROTHERS

Once again this past summer, leaders of public colleges and universities around the country were left scratching their heads, trying to figure out how best to fulfill their missions in the face of continuing disinvestment by the states. This has become a predictable part of July and August, a time we once used to catch up on our research and reading and maybe even get a few days by the lake. To the dismay of our spouses, children and grandchildren, those days are gone.

July starts like this: After months of bickering about too-high taxes and government waste, the state legislature finally adjourns amidst finger-pointing and rancor. The budget it has passed is not as bad as it looked in March, but the appropriation to higher education is still several percentage points below what we received last year. To compensate, our boards are now called back into session to set even higher tuition and fees than the increases they had announced earlier. The presidents and provosts start making cuts in the budgets they had promised the deans and face the angry parents and students who have just been notified that their bills for September will be several hundred dollars (or several thousand) higher than they thought they would be. Next comes the annual letter from the state budget office

requiring that next year’s budget request be no more than 90 percent of this year’s appropriation. By August, we are sitting in small, hot conference rooms, listening to our finance officers wailing in the growing darkness.

Clearly, as we said ad nauseum in the 1990s, the paradigm has shifted. The days when we could advance the cause by pointing to the rapid growth of America’s Knowledge Economy and higher education’s role in building the common good are over. As University of Maryland President C.T. Mote wrote recently in the *Washington Post*, the “personal benefit” model is now firmly established in the minds of both federal and state governments, complete with a reliance on staggering amounts of personal debt that has dramatically changed the decisions our students make about their lives and careers.

Today’s political leaders, governing boards and college and university presidents now need to get on with creating a new model for supporting our colleges and universities. As always, the people need a vision.

For 30 years now, I have listened to corporate leaders and politicians opine that our institutions should be run more like businesses—whatever that meant to them at the moment. What I know about successful businesses is that they bring ideas and capital together and take calculated risks based on a reasonable appraisal of the evolving marketplace. They leverage whatever resources they have, and they curse bureaucracies and regulators



of whatever origin. Today's businesses like to think of themselves as agile, quick to respond to change, moving from mass production to highly customized products and services. And while colleges and universities have survived for nearly a millennium using a very different model, our corporate colleagues seem to have carried the day.

It is hard to be agile when we are tied to archaic statewide purchasing and personnel systems set up to manage traditional state agencies, compensation rules that ignore the realities of the higher education marketplace and financial control systems well behind the contemporary realities of rapidly changing accounting standards.

So how will public colleges and universities adapt to a model in which they are expected to supply their own operating revenues while continuing to serve their states and nation for the greater public good? A few clues may be found.

The first is that the states have steadily increased their commitment to new and rehabilitated buildings and laboratories on public college campuses. In New England, the fabled \$1 billion investment called UConn 2000 and the subsequent billion three years later, has transformed the University of Connecticut, giving it the tools to both serve Connecticut and compete with some of the most prestigious universities in the country for well-prepared students, grants and gifts. At the University of Rhode Island, new residence halls, wonderful new science and business facilities, rehabilitated historic buildings and new athletic venues have set us on the same path.

A second is the creation of matching gift programs in many states, a strategy to bring in private dollars to state universities by demonstrating to potential but skeptical donors that their gifts will leverage state money, not replace it. These programs have great poten-

tial for building public university endowments that now lag far behind those of our sister institutions in the independent sector.

Finally, the states have been passing laws that allow university professors to build companies that commercialize the fruits of their research, with the universities themselves (or their foundations) holding equity positions in those companies, creating new revenue streams. Taken together, it looks like a plan.

But while the states have given us some new tools with which to toil in this fallen world, they continue to prevent us from functioning like modern business enterprises by maintaining and even tightening the bureaucratic controls left over from another time. It is hard to be agile when we are tied to things like the archaic statewide purchasing and personnel systems set up to manage traditional state agencies, compensation rules that ignore the realities of the higher education marketplace and financial control systems well behind the contemporary realities of rapidly changing accounting standards. More problematic yet are state budget regulations that inhibit planning beyond the current fiscal year and prevent the creation of the reserves necessary to ride out years like the past several or to save up for critical investments. The University of New Hampshire broke through this barrier several years ago, allowing UNH to implement "responsibility-based management" with great success. So should we all.

Today's leaders in higher education will have to abandon, however grudgingly, the defense of financial entitlement and instead shift their focus to gaining the financial and management independence required to maintain the viability of their institutions. In this campaign, we have natural allies among our alumni and advisory boards, who can grasp what would happen to their businesses if they were required to observe similar restrictions. We will all continue to ask "Where's the money?," but we will also understand that it is up to us to create it.

Robert L. Carothers is president of the University of Rhode Island.

Roads to the Presidency

Once upon a time, most college presidents were former academics. Now, they come from all walks of life, especially business and politics. A few New England examples:

- Berklee College of Music President Roger H. Brown is the former CEO of Bright Horizons Family Solutions, the childcare and early childhood development outfit.
- Wesleyan University President Doug Bennet was assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs in the Clinton administration and CEO of National Public Radio.
- Bowdoin College President Barry Mills was a partner in the New York City law firm of Debevoise & Plimpton.

- Southern New Hampshire University President Paul Leblanc is a former vice president of Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Harvard University President Lawrence H. Summers was U.S. secretary of the Treasury in the Clinton administration.
- Marlboro College President Elizabeth McCulloch-Lovell was executive director of President Clinton's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.
- Bryant University President Ronald K. Machtley was a U.S. congressman from Rhode Island.