

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

ANNUAL MEETING

June 4, 1971

Foreword

Owing to illness which restricted my activities until April, Vice President Chen will report on the current college year. I shall attempt to give an overview of the present and set forth certain guidelines for the immediate future, which I trust may help the College in the difficult 1970's.

An Era of Anxiety and Fear

We all recognize that the favorable climate which characterized the decade of 1955-65 has vanished. In higher education, veritably in all facets of life, change has been thrust upon us, making ours a different world from that of a few years ago. The rise of the activist student concerned about war, race, poverty, and pollution has altered thinking and response. The independence and the irregularities of that same student have lost rather than won friends. Constantly spiralling inflation and a tightening of the economy have shrunk the educational dollar. These same factors have led to a cut-back in governmental support. The black clouds of federal restrictions have led to a new hesitancy among philanthropic agencies. Meanwhile, there has come a disenchantment with academia in general. The private sector of education has been doubly hurt as the competition from public universities continues to increase steadily. Consequently, many prominent educators, men whose judgments we respect, have become prophets of doom. Many contend that the small private college is destined to oblivion, and that the few who do remain will become mediocre in quality.

As a president who has served twenty-eight years on two campuses, I understand this concern. The optimism of the past has rightfully disappeared. But I cannot share the profound pessimism which grips the minds of many, particularly when I evaluate Kalamazoo College. While numerous small colleges may go the way of the dinosaur and the dodo bird, I believe that the outlook for Kalamazoo College is bright.

Into the Future with Strength

For nearly two decades this College has been a hungry institution. Every one of its constituencies has worked steadfastly to build a strong educational institution. Today there are only a handful of small colleges in the nation which can move into the future with comparable confidence. Let me enumerate the more obvious advantages:

- (1) The Kalamazoo Plan, innovative in the '60's, continues to be equally relevant for the 1970's.
- (2) Enrollment of freshmen for the fall has been ahead every single month since the beginning of the recruitment year even though high school graduates have levelled off.

- (3) Our year-around program and three-course load have led to monetary savings for the operational budget.
- (4) The Ruml Plan through which professorial salaries are determined by tuition has over the years brought added efficiency to the financial operation.
- (5) The operating budget for 1970-71 is in balance.
- (6) Charges to students are \$300-\$500 below competitors making it possible either to attract students by under-pricing or to add revenue by closing the tuition gap.
- (7) The College has no short or long-term indebtedness except that accruing through unpaid pledges to development programs.
- (8) While still modest, the endowment approaches \$15,000,000 or \$11,000 per student, which is surpassed only by Oberlin among the GLCA colleges.
- (9) With seventeen new or completely renovated buildings, the unmet needs in the physical plant can be answered with a few \$100,000.
- (10) Kalamazoo College has a constituency and a community with a pattern of generous support which should be expandable when a worthy need is presented.
- (11) The College is situated in a small but thriving metropolis in an affluent state, where the cultural, religious, and intellectual attractions bring breadth of education with minimal expenditure for the College.
- (12) The College has fortunately created a national image which at times seems even more favorable than my biased and subjective appraisal of the institution.

This edge we now enjoy has come because of the effort and sacrifice of many, most of whom will be soon turning over to others their roles of leadership. Those who follow should be just as capable, or even more so, than we, for strength attracts and creates strength. So I remain optimistic.

But Change is Mandatory

While we can identify our advantages, our strength will soon be dissipated if we fail to heed the signs of fear and doom, and adapt our stance accordingly. I firmly believe that higher education must change markedly or the anxieties of the present will surface. To illustrate, let me spell out one area in which change must come. Some technique must be found through which professors can serve more students yet still find time to keep abreast with their discipline. We have a dedicated faculty devoting as full a work-week as we can rightfully expect. Yet even with a Ruml Plan of large-and-small classes, the average professor teaches only 46 students concurrently. This same professor is in class only eight hours per week. Assuming a 40-hour week, - and most of ours work beyond the minimum - a professor is devoting only one-fifth of his work time to income-producing activity for a period of three-fourths of the year. I see no way in which the College can pay in 1975 an average salary of \$25,000 to full professors whose income-producing hours are so limited.

What is the answer to the dilemma? The professor must be required to teach and the administrator to administer. We have allowed the teaching responsibility to be dissipated. He must concentrate in that area for which he is trained and paid. I for one have no quarrel with his faithfulness to the job. Rather, I protest vigorously against the way in which his skills have been so diffused that he no longer is devoting his major effort to the job he knows best, so all suffer. A drastic change in both governance and teaching can and must take place.

The Plus Which Brings Quality

I wish to emphasize, however, that just squeezing every drop of juice out of the orange is not the full answer. We can increase teaching load but if it is accomplished by adding to work time, or by reducing the personalized education given students, then the College will have lost in quality what it gained in quantity. If the curriculum is streamlined at the sacrifice of enrichment, then the institution will likewise suffer. 'Tis true, the Ruml Plan and the year-around concept have added efficiency and productivity, but the College's apparent progress has come even more from exciting educational projects like foreign study and career-service. In fact, were it not for such innovations Kalamazoo College would today be only a very efficient midwestern institution known to a few but laughed at by the majority because of its strange Indian name.

The Heyl Foundation, which will henceforth channel one-half of the income from a \$2,000,000 fund to science, offers an undergirding which should assure a quality program in this division. During the '70's we should expand our efforts in the arts, in computer science, and in the audio-visual. The time may well come, too, when we will wish to expand the offerings in international studies. While these will require money, an institution with an exciting program can and should continue to appeal to foundations and friends. We only know that to maintain the extra necessary to hold its position the College will need constantly to evaluate and to change, seeking to find the optimum educational opportunity. Thus the primary thrust for efficiency should be undertaken to make possible those refinements which give the plus in education. Only the distinctive college will endure with optimum success.

No College Can Be Stronger Than Its Faculty

What happens to the educational process at Kalamazoo will be determined more by the faculty than by any other single entity. Of the many decisions of the last two decades, none was more astute than Dr. Light's initial program which brought six high level embryonic faculty leaders to the campus. It has been the faculty, not the President, who have spearheaded our academic thrust. It has been they, as much as Trustees and President, who have been hungry for improvement. Because of their competences we have sought to reward them more adequately than their counterparts in other institutions. As a result they have remained at Kalamazoo, doing their job, moving into continuous employment and becoming increasingly in a groove. So as I retire I see in this great strength of the past what can be the lodestone of the future.

We must recognize that the leaders of the faculty, now reaching the time of highest financial need, have earned a high level of compensation, yet they are no longer rushing eagerly forward to change the institution. We must realize, too, that even our high

salary increments cannot be slowed down very long before other colleges and other fields of employment compete with us. For instance, at present our median cash salary is \$15,056* Plumbers in Kalamazoo are paid at a rate of \$18,240 per year; electricians at a level of \$16,220; bricklayers at a scale of \$17,580. Thus we must continue to run just to stay up with the skilled tradesman.

I cannot leave this topic without offering some counsel. The last year and a half, in which I have had tense confrontation with the faculty, indicates that we must be firm but understanding. I would caution against allowing fringe benefits to expand at the sacrifice of cash remuneration. I would urge that the Board of Trustees ask its Committee on Faculty Relations to study continuous employment and academic rank to find mechanics through which they can be retarded, even if it means the loss of a few professors. And above all else, I would urge a continuation of salary raises based on teaching performance.

The Potential of Tomorrow

I contend too that the financial future of this College will be proportional to the breadth and scope of the vision of administrators and Trustees. Private gifts to colleges and universities decreased last year for the first time in more than a decade. This drop of 8% can be traced to the reduction in college campaigns for buildings, which have caught up to physical needs. But collegiate fund raising is not at an end; in fact, we may be on the verge of an even larger projection as almost every institution finds its operational budget in the red. Many alert and alive colleges have on the drafting board intensive efforts in estate planning and campaigns for endowment - to expand the numbers of professorial chairs and scholarships and salary supports. Here at Kalamazoo, even with development work necessarily reduced, we are having a vintage year indirectly through the Heyl Trust and directly through the legacies from E. A. DeWaters and Lena DeWaters. Meanwhile, the Annual Fund is reaching an all-time high.

The need for continuing financial support is even more obvious than in the 1960's. And the institution with a saleable program, augmented by Trustees and administrative leadership, will move ahead. Kalamazoo can and must do the same.

Conclusion

I now complete what may well be my last report to the a Board of Trustees. No president could ever hope for more wholehearted cooperation or more dedicated leadership by the contingency in general and the Board of Trustees in particular. Fortunately we have been able to achieve the majority of our goals. But danger lies hidden in our own success. The thrust forward of the last two decades will inevitably need to be repeated in the 1970's. New academic programs must be conceived and executed. New resources must be located and secured. New faculty must be hired and inspired. New Trustees must be attracted and given control. There is no other way if Kalamazoo College is to remain in the forefront. Merely to hold the line in the next decade is a posture which can lead only to regression. I urge that Trustees give to my successor the same wholehearted leadership which you have graciously accorded to me. Then this College can and will remain among the best among the small colleges of the nation.

* Full and associate professors.

Respectfully submitted,

Weimer K. Hicks