

THE FLORIDA CHALLENGE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The Council of 100

May 1990

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From frontier agricultural outpost to dynamic diversified state, the transformation of Florida during the past generation has been dramatic and often awe inspiring. This remarkable state has emerged as one of this nation's premier locations for international trade and commerce, leisure activities and retirement, education and culture, while maintaining and diversifying its extensive agricultural base. It has absorbed waves of migrants, some from northern regions of the United States in search of warmth, charm, and a quality life and others from Latin America and the Caribbean seeking opportunity and freedom.

Over the past generation Florida's political culture and balance has changed in response to dramatic population shifts, redistricting, ethnic and racial politics, and the challenge of meeting the needs of a dynamic and growing economy within an archaic and inadequate tax structure. At the symbolic transition of a new decade, Florida finds itself close to the limit of what can be done with traditional, incremental adjustments to its economic infrastructure and must search for new formulas and new principles to guide the development required to complete this century with Florida well placed to assume its leadership position for this country's economic future. It matters little whether we look at housing, social services, transportation, health care, urban development, community infrastructure, primary and secondary education, or higher education, the multiple challenges of growth, adequacy, and accountability symbolize the need for alternative ways to solve problems and capture opportunities.

THE EDUCATION OF SUCCESS

Although much discussion revolves around questions of public revenue and taxation, clearly critical issues for our time, we often find little agreement about the results we expect from our public institutions or the relationship between new funding and the achievement of those results. Like many institutions in Florida, education offers an illustrative example of remarkable success on the brink of

decline. Over the past several months I have begun to explore the context and achievements of Florida higher education in an effort to understand what the University of Florida needs to do to contribute to the success of this state's economic transformation. Although I have much yet to learn, I offer this preliminary perspective in hopes that your comments will help me better understand what makes this state and its communities such a vibrant and dynamic environment.

No sensible observer of economic progress and prosperity resists the notion that success in our highly technological and intensely competitive world requires first rate education. Indeed from every level of government, from critics and scholars, from teachers and professors, from business and the professions, and from parents and students, come studies and commentaries outlining flaws in America's education. We struggle nationwide with high drop-out rates, unequal access, poor performance on standardized tests, increased alienation from highly bureaucratic systems, and doubts about the wisdom of our leaders, our professors, our teachers. Once a place for reading, writing, and arithmetic, our public schools now teach an array of subjects, assume responsibilities once reserved for home, church, and community, and compile endless statistical reports. These added responsibilities come along with a decline in the status accorded teachers, a reduction in the authority of individual schools and parents to determine philosophy and results, and a growth in the desperate enthusiasm for bureaucratic monitoring. All these increased responsibilities and duties, tasks and obligations remain crammed into the same class time once reserved for reading, writing, and arithmetic. We soon discover that in making our schools the place for social and cultural reform we have lost much of their vitality as centers of learning. Many students never make it through this school system, dropping out at rates far too high for comfort. But many do graduate and significant proportions go on to higher education.

In Florida, those who graduate from the schools enter a tightly articulated system of higher education designed to maximize access, control costs, and produce a carefully structured pattern of higher learning that serves the state with minimal duplication and maximal effectiveness. While not without significant problems, the network of community colleges and state universities has done a remarkable job of meeting many of the state's needs for higher education. No set of impressions can do justice to the rich texture of this system, so let me focus on universities, the institutions I understand best.

THE UNIVERSITIES' MISSION

Whether in Florida, California, Michigan, or New York, universities all serve the same mission, that trilogy of teaching, research, and service. Where universities

serve these well, and find coordinate support from other institutions in the community, they provide the expertise, knowledge, and creativity that helps fuel economic development, particularly in high value-added and high tech enterprises and services. California is the classic example of this phenomenon; Florida is on the verge of becoming another if we do things well.

Universities and colleges share a common commitment to teaching. Teaching, of course, has many components. Some parts of teaching involve the transmission of knowledge and information, the accumulation of fact and data that underlies the ability to analyze, interpret, and act. Other parts of teaching refer to the skills that turn information into knowledge and expertise, that translate experience and knowledge into wisdom and judgement, and that connect past through the present to the future and link traditional values to contemporary issues. Once we knew, with considerable consistency of opinion, what constituted the content and structure of a college education. We recognized the three part division of knowledge into arts and humanities, social and behavioral sciences, and mathematical and physical sciences. These, the foundation disciplines of the liberal arts and sciences curriculum, succumbed over the past generation to an assault based in part on the internal dynamics of learning and in part on the external requirements of our many constituencies.

Knowledge, that array of what we believe to be known about our world and its meaning, has both exploded and fragmented. Disciplines and sub-disciplines emerged and divided until the modern university catalog presents a bewildering complexity of new departments, majors, and subjects, each referenced to an expanding body of knowledge, a set of specialized analytical tools, and often a category of eager employers. Even professional disciplines, business, engineering, law, agriculture, journalism, suffered similar fragmentation, so that our graduates often specialize in subfields, each with a special terminology and set of skills.

THE ART AND SKILL OF TEACHING

Teaching, as an art and a skill, survives in our colleges and universities. Students and other observers find our teachers well prepared, effective, and dedicated. But they also find that teaching receives less emphasis within the university, less resources, and less reward than other activities. Quality teaching, while frequently recognized is not often fully rewarded. Some, seeing that research or service activities appear to reap greater reward, propose a fundamental conflict between research and teaching and declare teaching the loser. But such a perspective misses the point.

Teaching is an activity requiring great skill, preparation, and attention but its performance is an ephemeral act, occurring and disappearing at the same time. Fragments survive in the minds and souls of our students, perhaps to be reconstructed in a faded form by some evaluation of teaching. When we evaluate our teachers, the record they bring to the table is faded, incomplete, and vague. Until we develop good means of evaluation, the rewards for teaching will remain reduced. The miracle, of course, is that so many faculty do such an extraordinary job of teaching, even without much promise of direct reward.

THE RESEARCH MISSION

Then there is research. American research and graduate education remains one of America's most internationally competitive exports, long after automobiles and many consumer goods lost out to better and cheaper overseas products. We maintain this advantage because in graduate higher education and in research we still, for the most part, invest for the long term, a strategy abandoned in many other American industries. Measured over two or three years, university research appears wasteful and profligate, for we sponsor projects that have no immediate practical purpose, but measured by the decades that constitute the life cycle of major technological and scientific change, research and graduate education in American universities has been unusually successful.

SERVICE TO THE STATE AND NATION

Service within the trilogy of the university mission refers primarily to the translation of research and teaching into direct benefits to the state or nation. For land-grant universities, nothing exemplifies the unity between research, teaching, and service better than the operation of extension centers where research informs the success of agriculture and where teaching reaches out to serve the community. Economic success for the state ultimately depends on close connections between the research programs of the universities and the businesses and industries that find these ideas useful. Service brings university resources and expertise to its communities through continuing education, museums, the arts, music, consulting, and a host of other activities.

What often escapes a casual observer is that these missions of research, teaching, and service represent a division of activities not a division of people. Our faculty and staff frequently do all three of these tasks, and over the lifetime of a faculty member the amount of time and creative energy devoted to any one will vary greatly. It is in the combination of these varying faculty and staff talents to produce

the results expected of higher education that our institutions face their greatest challenge.

THE FLORIDA CHALLENGE

Florida, over the past generation, has produced an unusually well articulated system of higher education which supports multiple institutions from the community colleges through the comprehensive research universities, each with a particular focus, but all sharing parts of the universal goals of teaching, research, and service. This system has been built with the leadership of a community that recognized the central role of higher education in the economic and social development of the state and with the commitment and ingenuity of a legislature capable of planning and investing for results beyond the next election. The achievements of Florida higher education have been remarkable but we now must recognize a new challenge to this shared vision.

The challenge comes from several directions and manifests itself in various ways. Let me outline some of these:

The Resource Deficit--Through fast growth and dynamic expansion, the universities and colleges in this state have developed campuses, built buildings, equipped laboratories, acquired faculties and staff, purchased computers, and accumulated libraries. This creative energy has left us with institutions that are in many ways better than their resource base. They have better faculty than our salary structure supports, better staff than rates would indicate, and better students than most states can claim. This happy situation is, of course, temporary, for in the end the market gets us all. As we have succeeded in attracting the best we have found it necessary to pay market prices, but since our general level of support is below market, many existing faculty and staff find themselves underpaid. Over time, that gap grows larger and larger, and the most marketable of the continuing faculty eventually seek employment elsewhere, or worse yet, simply divert their creative energy to supplement an inadequate income. With the aging of our institutions' buildings and with the increased requirements for sophisticated teaching space for laboratories, for computers, and for other infrastructure, the state's higher education plant requires support and assistance just as the state's resources for this activity appear to be stagnating and in some instances declining. Programs that multiplied the effectiveness of every state dollar such as the support for research funding also appear threatened as desperate legislators attempt to rob Peter to pay Paul in the litany of state needs. Clearly, the incremental politics of state funding of infrastructure and operations for higher education can no longer sustain the investment and the quality built up over the past decades. Without a creative

approach to taxation, the state's remarkable success and investment in higher education will slowly erode, leaving Florida large in population and potential without the capacity to manage its future.

Bureaucratic Paralysis--Yet even within the constraints of the state's resources, Florida finds itself burdened with an overly complex and bureaucratic system for managing its state universities. While the Board of Regents and its staff have demonstrated the ability to operate a state wide system, minimize unnecessary competition amongst campuses, allocate resources effectively, and audit expenditures responsibly, the state imposes a host of duplicative controls on the operation of state universities that absorb staff and resources in unproductive activities while at the same time reducing institutional incentives for efficiency and productivity. This situation produces a bureaucratic paralysis just at the time when we need flexibility and adaptability to meet the increasing demands on the campuses.

Institutional Inertia--Some inertia and rigidity also bind the universities. Universities often hold fast to simple models of resource allocation, fail to develop flexible methods of reward and incentive, and resist changes in curriculum or method that hold promise of improvements in efficiency and effectiveness. Education, because it is a complex process with uncertain long-term outcomes, resists simple bottom-line evaluation, but universities can develop result oriented measures of success if offered incentives to do so. As long as institutions are bound, however, by expenditure allocations that argue against savings or efficiency, universities must engage in practices that spend everything allocated, build no reserves, and avoid productivity enhancements that may produce savings. Any other strategy simply reduces the income received by the university because overly zealous legislative budget makers believe that savings indicate a lack of need, and reduce appropriations.

The Failure of Access--The greatest tragedy that results from these events is the growing reduction in access. Not only do many universities have too few minority and women students, but the admission requirements into many state universities may have reached a level that may be higher than appropriate for a state supported institution. Even worse, while the community college system provides access for many students who cannot reach the state universities as freshmen, their graduates, while finding places in state universities may find it difficult to gain admission to many specialty programs and majors due to a lack of capacity. Demographic data indicate that without significant increases in university capacity, access problems will worsen.

THE FLORIDA PLAN FOR UNIVERSITY SUCCESS

A Florida Plan for University Success will meet these challenges with a clear strategy. Let's explore what the Plan could contain.

Educational success in this state begins with all of us recognizing the following truths:

- * A healthy and dynamic college and university system, and strong support for all three missions of teaching, research, and service, will make it possible for the state of Florida to achieve its goals for economic development and national leadership.
- * State support of higher education, both for community colleges and universities, must return to levels that at least match the national average per student enrolled. We now run something less than 74% of the national average, down from 92% in 1970.
- * The state university system and its individual institutions have reached the level of maturity and accountability required to manage their own affairs, subject to policy guidelines from the state and end-of-year audits.
- * The state university system must have the flexibility to create incentives for success, not incentives for expenditure. Savings, reinvestment of retained revenue, leveraging of funds generated through research, and budgetary flexibility should be encouraged, and the effectiveness and appropriateness of university action should be judged by the goals and the quality achieved, not by the amount spent each year.

Success will require that the universities recognize the following propositions.

- * With the authority to manage our affairs we acquire responsibility for the results achieved. .
- * Even the most comprehensive of universities must make choices among programs and activities, for not everything within the range of university life can be supported at the same level.
- * Judgements must be made if resources are to be distributed effectively, and we must learn to evaluate and reward teaching with the same degree of precision that we now evaluate research.

- * We must identify savings that can be recycled into resolving salary difficulties, providing support for valuable faculty and staff , and improving programs and support for students.
- * We must compete nationally and internationally for opportunities to leverage faculty and student talent to produce additional resources for institutional support through grants and contracts.
- * We must mobilize private support for university programs so that state funds can reach farther and accomplish more.
- * We must be prepared to develop intelligible and persuasive indicators of institutional achievement in teaching, research, and service so that legislators and citizens can measure success and identify failure.

The Florida Plan requires a five-year commitment.

- * This state and its universities should develop a five year program to achieve this agenda.
- * On the state side, the legislature should agree to bring higher education funding closer to the national averages and keep it constant, adjusting only for inflation, new enrollment, and state mandated new programs.
- * The state should also agree to assign the monitoring and allocation responsibility to the Board of Regents which in turn should delegate that responsibility, subject to review, to the institutions.
- * On the university side, we should agree to solve our internal allocation problems through efficiencies and retained savings.
- * We should prepare protocols for the evaluation of higher education results acceptable to Regents and legislature, and we should implement these evaluation protocols during this five year period.
- * At the end of the five years, we can evaluate whether this plan works and develop further incentives for success.

- * During the five year period, as enrollment pressures rise, the state may find it necessary to expand existing universities, create new ones, or otherwise adjust the total size of the higher education investment by the state, but such new institutions or expanded programs of old institutions must be held to the same standards of accountability and the same protocol as existing enterprises.

The Florida Plan requires a method of measuring success.

While the development of effective protocols for evaluation will prove difficult, almost any evaluation that addresses results is better than one based on expenditures. A useful protocol would have some of the following features.

- * We need multiyear measurements. Many university activities cannot produce results on a single year basis, particular activities related to improvement of facilities, enhancement of undergraduate curriculum, improvement in undergraduate skills.
- * We need differential measurements. The mix of items to be measured in any protocol must vary depending on the institution. Universities with large service obligations will have items in their protocols not measured for other institutions. Medical schools have different issues than liberal arts colleges. Research requires different measures than teaching.
- * We need national market indicators. Wherever possible universities should identify national market indicators: salary levels, support levels, teaching achievement, research activity, and the like. These provide surrogate indicators of competitiveness, often identifying where bureaucratic rigidities may have created special categories or inefficient operations.
- * We need consensus indicators. When devising these indicators, universities, faculty, staff, students, the Board of Regents, state government, legislature, and community must all find a way to participate in the establishment of the protocols for measuring achievement. In general the protocols must be structured so that state-wide goals are the most general and institutional goals are the most specific. There should be many more protocols for measurement at the institutional level than at the Board of Regents level, and even fewer at the state level.

This Florida Plan can be accomplished. We must be committed to its success and we must empower those who have demonstrated competence and expertise to make the appropriate decisions and improve their institutions as a consequence. The state's commitment to stabilize resources will challenge the universities, and the strong, active support of a business community committed to the principle of efficiency and responsibility in higher education will ensure our success.

This Florida Plan can inspire our commitment and mobilize our energy; and we need your active help and your continuing support.

Thank you.

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