

# Report of the President

Vahter Gregoire

## Reflections on Encounters With Three Cultures

*by Vartan Gregorian*

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### Introduction

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1764, 1895 and 1911. Those dates represent quite a span of time. The first is the year that Brown University was founded; the second is the year that The New York Public Library was established and the third is the year that Andrew Carnegie created the philanthropic foundation he named Carnegie Corporation of New York.

It has been my privilege to serve the three above-named institutions, each representative of a different nonprofit culture, each with a different structure, different history, and different dynamics. While serving these institutions I have been both an observer and a participant, a spectator and an actor, a reader and a lender, a re-

ceiver and a giver—and every step of the way has made for an exhilarating and inspiring journey.

At first as a foreign student, then as an immigrant, then as a citizen who was born and raised in Iran and spent his secondary school years in Lebanon, I was always keenly aware of being an outsider, even though, over time, I gradually became an “insider,” too. During the past fifty years, since I attended Stanford University as a freshman, I have always been interested not only in the outward, visible structure of organizations, but also their texture, their idiosyncrasies, and their individual institutional cultures. Furthermore, my career has been such that I have seen institutions both from below and above, from the trenches to the helm, which allowed me to observe not only their individual segments but also to un-

derstand how all the parts fit together to form their whole structure and support their overall mission. In writing this essay, it is my intention to share my observations, and to reflect on and analyze the nature of the three cultures in which I have spent my career: libraries, the academy, and the field of philanthropy. These reflections are based primarily on my experiences as the head of The New York Public Library, Brown University and now, Carnegie Corporation of New York. I hope that some of my observations as an outsider/insider will provide useful insights and the kind of first-hand knowledge that may assist those who have taken or will take similar journeys especially now, when the role of nonprofits is so essential to the advancement of progress in our nation's social, cultural, and economic domains and when the role of foundations, in particular, seems to be in the national spotlight.

Naturally, I have not drawn my observations exclusively from the three institutions that I have headed. I have also relied on my previous experiences and impressions during the years that I was a professor at San Francisco State College, the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Pennsylvania. However, I have organized this essay along chronological lines, from my time at that most iconic of American libraries, The New York Public Library, followed by Brown University. Finally, I will examine the nature and scope of philanthropy in the United States as seen through the lens of Carnegie Corporation of New York, which I joined as president in 1997.

The experiences and knowledge I have acquired at each institution have had an impact on my experiences at the next. While each is different from the others, they do have common traits, common problems, and they often confront common issues. Perhaps their most

important commonality, though, is that all were founded to serve our society and our democracy, and all remain dedicated to that purpose.

Synthesizing what I have observed and learned over decades of service in three different cultures provides a major challenge. Hence, though I cannot promise to be brief, I will do my best to be thorough.




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## The New York Public Library

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One's opening lines are always indicative of what one thinks of the character of an institution. For me, The New York Public Library is much more than a cultural institution; I consider libraries to be among the central educational resources of any civilization, including ours, which is why, in 1981, when I first addressed the staff of the Library as their new president,<sup>1</sup> I called them "my fellow educators." Walking into the Library that morning I had

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<sup>1</sup> Vartan Gregorian served as president of The New York Public Library from 1981 to 1989.

thought about the important role that libraries had played in my life and about my respect for librarians, not simply as keepers of books and collections of materials but as true disseminators—even champions—of knowledge. Along with teachers and other public servants, they are modest, unsung civic heroes, who day after day, year after year, answer questions, provide guidance along the pathways of research and literature, and catalogue, organize and analyze information, turning what might seem like ordinary tasks into something sublime.

I have always been in awe of libraries and have been in love with books since I was a child. Later, I became a regular habitu  of bookstores particularly those that sell used books, an addiction that I know I share with many people around the world for whom prowling the aisles of a used bookstore is something close to going on a great treasure hunt.

When I arrived at The New York Public Library from the University of Pennsylvania, where I had served in both academic and administrative positions from 1972 until 1981, I was no stranger to libraries. After all, as an undergraduate and graduate student at Stanford University, I had more or less lived in the library as I pursued my education, which focused on history and the humanities. In subsequent years, as my interests widened to include fields such as European intellectual history, the history of the Middle East and of the modern Caucasus, not to mention Afghanistan, my appreciation for the scope, range and richness of library collections grew. When I became dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania, the university libraries became a much-beloved responsibility for me, as my concern was not only the quality and breadth of material and services they offered but ensuring their future, as well.

As to the many subjects I studied over the years, while I felt that I was caught between dilettantism and expertise, my unwavering interest in each and all of them made libraries a natural habitat for someone like me. The New York Public Library provided a nearly perfect home replete with seemingly endless opportunities to satisfy my intellectual curiosity. At the same time, I came to appreciate the obvious differences between the world of the university, which I had just left, and the world of libraries. To begin with, no one can graduate from a library. There are no entrance or exit exams. Individuals come and go, doing their work, their research, or just reading for pleasure. It was fascinating for me to walk through the Library and see all the different individuals who used the different collections—it was like having a window onto a true microcosm of humanity. People of different ages, genders, races, appearance and dress took up almost every chair in the Library or were bent over a book, a document or other material at almost every table.

Unlike universities, whose constituents are finite, The New York Public Library's constituents were, potentially, everybody. The Library did not have any specific or particular groups or individuals as its clientele: those who used the Library's facilities were an ever-changing cross-section of humanity who came from the city, from all across the country as well as from many foreign nations. In that connection, one of the many features of the Research Library that I found extraordinary was that one did not have to produce scholarly credentials, identification, or show citizenship status in order to read a book or an article, or see a photograph or some other item. It was anyone's right to look at and learn from the Library's materials. Even noncitizens had this same right because, when you walked into the Library, nobody asked your status in terms of American citizen-

ship, occupation, or residency. Just the fact that you showed up at the front door gave you the right to use the Library and all its resources and connections to the rest of the world.

The Library universalized everybody. By that I mean it served as a bridge between the individual and anything they wanted or needed to know about anything under the sun—or beyond it—that human beings had written, dreamed of or speculated about. I thought about that notion even more than I had in the past after the Library’s card catalogue was computerized because I realized, then, that whether a person was in the Main Research Library on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street or at any local branch library, they could look for material in any one of the many different collections throughout the system and find it with ease. In fact, computerization allowed someone in search of information to peruse not only the Library’s research collections (which today number more than 40 million items including books, maps, audio recordings, films, videotapes, CDs, DVDs, sheet music, prints, clippings and materials for the blind<sup>2</sup>) but also to gain access to the collections of other libraries across the globe. In many ways, the Library enabled those who used it to transcend the limitations of shelves and walls, of geography, of even space and time. It served as a bridge to the whole world, and provided a link to the past and a pathway to the future.

I was curious about the historical role and legacy of the library and was delighted to learn such interesting vignettes as the fact that, in their youth, the actor James Cagney, former New York Community Trust president Herbert B. West and novelist Cynthia Ozick all served as Library pages. They were paid very little but the value of their exposure to the vast

resources of the Library far outweighed their meager pay. When he was young, the late New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan spent his Saturday afternoons shining shoes on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and afterwards, would make his way to the Library’s Main Reading Room. “It was the first time I was taught that I was welcome in a place of education and learning,” he said. “I would go into that great marble palace and I would check my shoeshine box. A gentleman in a brown cotton jacket would take it as if I’d passed over an umbrella and a bowler hat.”<sup>3</sup>

Because the Library had so many grateful beneficiaries, I knew we did not have to rely only on our talented public affairs and development officers to tell the Library’s story. Others did. Individuals such as Senator Moynihan told it for us, and told it frequently, to all kinds of audiences. From time to time, though, I did hear particularly special or unusual tales about how the Library had influenced lives and events. For instance, early in the twentieth century, Pan American Airways sent researchers to the Library to help seek out routes to the Far East. Edwin Land did scientific research leading to his invention of instant photography in what is now The New York Public Library’s Science, Industry and Business Division. Law firms were heavy users of the Patents and Trademarks collection, one of the largest in the United States. The Library’s famous picture collection (which today includes an online database of over 30,000 images from books, magazines and newspapers as well as 450,000 digitized images from primary sources and printed rarities including illuminated manuscripts, historical maps, vintage posters, rare prints and photographs, illustrated books and printed ephemera), was, and is still extensively used by those in the advertising, fashion and

<sup>2</sup> The New York Public Library, Systemwide Statistics, [www.nypl.org/pr/objects/pdf/2003nyplfacts.pdf](http://www.nypl.org/pr/objects/pdf/2003nyplfacts.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> “The ‘People’s Library’ to Celebrate as a Cathedral of Knowledge for All,” *The New York Times*, May 19, 1986.

design fields, not to mention architects, interior decorators and others. Notable users included the actress Grace Kelly, who read about Victorian furniture, and Norbert Pearlroth, who did much of the research for Robert Ripley's syndicated *Believe It or Not* newspaper series.<sup>4,5</sup> Even Leon Trotsky spent some time at the Library during the few months in 1917 that he lived in New York City.

What also struck me as being particularly unique about the Library was that, as one of the cultural and intellectual centers of New York, it helped the city serve as the "capital" of many diasporas. I was, for example, astonished to find out that New York had around 300 ethnic publications that serve a tapestry of ethnic communities which, in turn, serve as bridges to their countries of origin. The city's great library is itself an embodiment of all the diasporas that have brought people of every race and ethnic and national origin to our country. It is a microcosm of America in all its diversity, and its holdings reflect that fact. It is also a reflection of the city's cycling waves of immigration. One can imagine, for instance, that a demographer studying the city's population shifts over the past hundred years might look through the lens of The New York Public Library system, particularly its local branches, and find out how German-language materials were gradually replaced on the shelves by books, magazines and newspapers in a variety of East European languages and then by a plethora of media representing a veritable explosion of languages including Greek, Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, Hindi, Russian, Japanese, Arabic, etc. For immigrants, libraries

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> "[Pearlroth] usually worked ten hours a day, six days a week in the Library's Main Reading Room. It was estimated by The New York Public Library that Pearlroth examined some 7,000 books every year, meaning that he researched in more than 350,000 books during decades of work on *Believe It or Not!*" Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norbert\\_Pearlroth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norbert_Pearlroth).

can represent both an anchor to the country and the culture they left behind and their first stable footing in their new land.

Let me illustrate this point by using as an example The New York Public Library's Dorot Jewish Division, a major collection that I found to be an extraordinarily "ecumenical" place where orthodox, conservative, reform, radical and atheist Jews—and even non-Jews—met, forgetting their differences because they were in the presence of a common cultural heritage. Over the years, the Dorot Division has also served some notable readers and researchers: Bob Dylan used the Jewish division to explore possible Jewish origins of Indians in the Southwestern United States. In the early part of the century, when the library was home to immigrant scholars and writers, Isaac Bashevis Singer read Yiddish and Hebrew books there for his weekly column for the *Jewish Daily Forward*.<sup>6</sup>

The same intensity of work, research and study could be found in many other parts of the Library, such as the Asian and Middle Eastern Division and the Slavic and Baltic Division, where a multitude of scholars from different ethnic backgrounds, with different ideologies and outlooks, poured over precious documents, intent on deciphering secrets about ancient military conflicts, resolving literary questions, retracing the progress of the Bolshevik Revolution, investigating the Stalinist period, the Russian avant-garde movement and Cold War intrigues. Peeking into these rooms, one saw great concentration on the face of every person, each one studying the special book, article or letter that would solve some mystery for them, prove a point or just satisfy their curiosity. In these rooms, one also felt the immeasurable depth and presence of human

<sup>6</sup> *op. cit.* "The 'People's Library'."

history in all its variations and dimensions, and with all its tragedies, triumphs and mysteries.

Another arm of the Library that was—and remains—a great source of pride to both the city and the Library is the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a national research library devoted to collecting, preserving and providing access to resources documenting the experiences of peoples of African descent throughout the world. The Center’s original materials came from the personal collection of the distinguished Puerto Rican-born black scholar and bibliophile, Arturo Alfonso Schomburg. In 1926, the Schomburg Center gained international prominence when its resources were combined with the Division of Negro Literature, History and Prints, which opened on January 14, 1905, in a library building on 135<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, constructed with funds donated by Andrew Carnegie. (In 1951, the branch library, now on 136<sup>th</sup> Street, was renamed for poet Countee Cullen, an important figure of the Harlem Renaissance.) Today, the Schomburg Center contains over 5,000,000 items and provides services and programs for constituents from the United States and abroad.

But of course the Library is more than the sum of its magnificent parts: it is also a living, breathing institution, always busy, always working, always alive. For me, one exciting bonus that came with being at the Library was meeting people I had only read or heard about, particularly writers. The Library had special rooms for writers, such as the Wertheim Study and the Frederick Lewis Allen Room, an intimate, book-lined sanctuary that has provided workspace for writers such as Robert Caro, who wrote much of *The Power Broker*<sup>7</sup> there. “I am only one of a thousand—or ten

thousand—writers for whom the Library has always been there when we needed it,” Caro has said.<sup>8</sup> Many other writers have also noted their debt to The New York Public Library: E. L. Doctorow, Norman Mailer, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Elizabeth Bishop, Barbara Tuchman, Rachel Carson, Arthur Schlesinger, John Updike, Betty Friedan, Theodore H. White, and Mary Gordon who said, “It’s like walking into a cathedral...It’s a place that represents peace and security. It reminds me that what I do in the world is a valuable and important thing to do.” Alfred Kazin, who researched his first book there in the 1930s, immortalized the Library in his book, *New York Jew*.<sup>9</sup> “Whenever I was free to read,” he wrote, “the great library seemed free to receive me.”<sup>10</sup>

The Library also welcomed academics of all stripes, including independent scholars and eminent professors from all over the world, as well as the vast spectrum of colleges and universities in the New York metropolitan area. One special relationship in this category is with the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, which houses the elite Ph.D. programs of the entire City University system. It was originally located right across the street on Fifth Avenue so that The New York Public Library could serve as its library.<sup>11</sup>

For me, as well as for everyone else working in the Library, it was exhilarating to see the multitude of users coming through the doors and the level of activity taking place in every room, on every floor during every hour that the Library was open. So much learning, so much education, so much knowledge and scholarship being absorbed, created, and

8 <http://www.nypl.org/university/storyexcerpts.html>

9 Knopf, 1978.

10 *op. cit.* “The ‘People’s Library.’”

11 In 1999, the Graduate Center moved to the landmark building that was the site of the former B. Altman department store on 34<sup>th</sup> Street and Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

7 *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (Knopf; 1974).

passed along. One felt a tremendous responsibility to the institution and to those who used and loved it—as well as to those who were yet to discover the richness of the resources within its walls—but also saw great opportunities to be a “good ancestor” to those who would follow after by strengthening the Library and increasing its ability to serve the citizens of the city and the nation, as well.

### A Democratic Institution

From the first day I walked into the Library as its president, it was clear to me that the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street building was not just a repository of books and collections but that its history,<sup>12</sup> its purpose, the way it operated and the diverse populations it served all went into endowing it with the majesty of a great civic monument that was a living, working symbol of American democracy. The Library bore witness to the openness of our nation, of New York, and of our society. It was, and always had been, a place where the social elite and the general populace met as equals and had equal access to the treasures within. In the presence of the Library’s vast storehouse of knowledge, all could be equally humbled by what they did not know and equally elevated by what they could learn—and everything they could learn was theirs, for free.

Institutions such as The New York Public Library, however, are only free because people have decided to subsidize the library’s operations by contributing to it as taxpayers and as individual benefactors. But even if costs are met one year, they are sure to rise the next,

<sup>12</sup> In 1895, New York City’s two important, semi-public libraries, the Astor and Lenox libraries, agreed to join with the Tilden Trust, which had been bequeathed money by the once-governor of New York, Samuel J. Tilden (1814-1886), to “establish and maintain a free library and reading room in the city of New York,” to form a new entity that would be known as The New York Public Library. The cornerstone for the new library was laid in 1902.

so new ways of generating funding for the Library was a constant challenge. Many innovations, including all the new technologies that were implemented at the Library, certainly enhanced service to the institution’s users but did not save money. In fact, they usually increased costs because they required new staff expertise, new technicians, new computer hardware and other equipment, new software, etc. And it wasn’t just the four research centers in Manhattan<sup>13</sup> that had to be supported but also the 85 branches in the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island. (New York City’s other boroughs, Queens and Brooklyn, each have separate library systems.)

Each of the research centers and all of the branches were always striving to serve not only their “regular” users but also new ones who came through the doors every day, which meant that while the Library was still a rich resource for immigrants trying to bridge the gap between their experiences in the United States and their country of origin, there were now additional newcomers to serve. Different branch libraries in different communities throughout the city found themselves with patrons who had emigrated from such a variety of places as Asia, Africa, Central Europe, Latin America and the many countries and regions that had once been part of the Soviet Union. And because the branch libraries were integral to the community, pivotal to the acculturation process for newcomers, after-school havens for eager students, and lynchpins of local cultural and social events, when people walked through the doors of the libraries in their communities they found much more than books. The libraries provided English-as-a-second-language classes, children’s programs, computer training,

<sup>13</sup> The Humanities and Social Sciences Library; The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center; the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; and the Science, Industry and Business Library.

as well as introductory courses on genealogy, typing, map reading, stocks and mutual funds, patents and trademarks, and much more. In that connection, it is important to note that for some immigrants who may not have had the opportunity to receive much education in their homeland and were now struggling, as well, to get by in a completely new environment, the Library provided a dignified and respectful place to study. For some people who might be embarrassed to reveal their lack of education, it's easier to say to others that "I'm going to the library," rather than admit the need to go to literacy classes. Particularly for those individuals who personally, or culturally, felt it important to "save face" in this manner, the Library offered a safe haven to learn on their own.

It's important to remember that even today, libraries across the nation continue to play this role. And perhaps their contributions are even more central to acculturation now that our nation is experiencing the largest immigrant and refugee resettlement since the Industrial Revolution. Cities up and down the East and West coasts, across the Great Plains and all across the South—rather than just the gateway cities of the past such as New York and Los Angeles—are the new, nontraditional settling grounds where foreign-born newcomers find jobs, housing, and affordable prices. In each of these places, where both new immigrants and long-time citizens—schoolchildren and adults alike—may not have the ability to buy laptops and home computers or to pay cell phone bills or purchase iPods on which to download news and information, libraries are still the common ground where, as Andrew Carnegie said, democracy and learning intertwine.

In essence, the research libraries and all the circulating branches were the most democratic of institutions, open and available to all who wanted to use them. The libraries were also

constantly seeking new ways to serve their publics—which were, and are, just about everyone. That was among the reasons why, when choosing Trustees for The New York Public Library, the possibilities were endless because serving the Library meant demonstrating appreciation and loyalty not only to the City of New York, but also to the nation as well as to the spirit of democracy.

The Library's Board was made up of people from all walks of life: writers, industrialists, socialites, business leaders, lawyers—all of them serving the Library without pay or any other material reward while also contributing to it financially.

Let me illustrate the uniquely democratic character of both the Library and its Trustees by focusing on three rare and remarkably civic-minded individuals who served on the Library's Board.

Mrs. Brooke Astor, the Library's Board Chair and later, Honorary Chair, was regarded by everyone as the doyenne of New York society. She also provided a living link to the Library's Astor<sup>14</sup>, Tilden and Lennox collections. The sophisticated, determined, gracious and generous Mrs. Astor made the Library not only a fashionable obligation on the part of New York high society but also a noble cause that transcended class and wealth. She set the standard for recognizing that The New York Public Library was not an institution to which one deigned to make charitable contributions but rather that it was a public trust deserving of investment by every philanthropist and philanthropic organization because it encompassed the entire spectrum of culture and education available in our nation. Through her founda-

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<sup>14</sup> The Astor Library, which was merged into the New York Public Library in 1895, was founded by a \$400,000 bequest of John Jacob Astor (1763–1848). See also footnote 12.

tion, she not only donated more than \$24 million to the Library but got directly involved in other ways, such as visiting the branches, sitting with parents and grandparents and talking to them about their children, reading to children and chatting with the librarians. Just giving money was not enough for her, since *noblesse oblige* was not at all her style of philanthropy. Her philosophy was that she never gave money unless she visited whatever project or institution was the potential recipient and thoroughly acquainted herself with its mission, goals and accomplishments. Participation was essential to Mrs. Astor, as was, in the case of The New York Public Library, making it her personal responsibility to bear witness to its greatness. She was determined to send a message far and wide that the Library and its branches were there to educate, serve and enhance the lives of all individuals striving for wisdom and knowledge, and that they also had a special role to play in the lives of families and their children—those who would be the leaders of tomorrow—and hence, investing in the Library meant investing in the future.

Richard B. Salomon was, to the best of my knowledge, the first Jewish Chairman of the Board in the history of The New York Public Library, serving from 1977 to 1981. Known as “Charles of the Ritz” because he was the former chairman and chief executive of Lanvin-Charles of the Ritz, Inc., he launched many careers including those of Vidal Sassoon and Yves St. Laurent. He was a larger-than-life figure, credited with almost single-handedly “inventing” Madison Avenue in terms of groundbreaking packaging and marketing. In addition to his extraordinary leadership in the business world, he was a man with two great passions: Brown University and The New York Public Library. He loved the Library because it stood as a symbol of citizenship and opportunity

and functioned as a great engine of democracy, personifying America’s dedication to openness, freedom, and a world of opportunity.

Brooke Astor and Richard Salomon were a great combination, but there was a third actor who made this group into a powerful triumvirate working on behalf of the Library, and that was Andrew Heiskell, a giant in the publishing industry. When I first met him, he was the outgoing CEO of Time, Inc., a member of the Harvard Corporation and the incoming chairman of The New York Public Library’s Board of Trustees. Born in Naples, Italy to American expatriate parents, he spent the first twenty years of his life leading a nomadic existence, with his mother and sister, a life that took them from hotel to hotel in Italy, France, Austria, Germany and Switzerland. Though he had occasional tutors, he didn’t go to school until he was ten and he never graduated from college. He knew nothing about America when he arrived here at the age of twenty, at the height of the Depression, but ten years later he had become the publisher of *Life*, the most successful news magazine in the United States. For Andrew, duty, honor, service, country and humanity were permanent values. Unlike Brooke Astor and Richard Salomon, Andrew Heiskell was very outspoken. But what he did have in common with Astor and Salomon was that he cared deeply about The New York Public Library because it represented the freedom to learn, to become educated and to exploit the opportunities that life offers. All three individuals contributed their time, their energy, their imagination, their names and their fortunes to supporting and strengthening the Library.

A fourth leader of the Board soon emerged: Marshall Rose, who spearheaded the renovation of The New York Public Library and transformed the former B. Altman’s department store on Fifth Avenue into the \$100 mil-

lion Science, Industry, and Business Library. In addition, a unique feature of The New York Public Library's Board of Trustees was that the cardinal of the Catholic Archdiocese of New York was an *ex officio* member of the Board. This was because in the early part of the century, The New York Public Library had acquired the libraries of the archdiocese, hence it was customary to have the cardinal on the Board. When I was president of the Library, Terence Cardinal Cook was a Trustee, lending his particular political clout to the Board, as did his successor, John Cardinal O'Connor. There were quite a number of other civic, cultural and business leaders, including representatives of the mayor, the comptroller, and the City Council who also served on the Board on an *ex officio* basis; their devotion to the Library was selfless and their efforts on its behalf boundless.

The New York Public Library also benefited from the professionalism and commitment of the directors, curators, librarians and staff who believed passionately in the institution<sup>15</sup> and from the efforts of the many able administrators in other departments such as Budget, Finance, and Public Affairs. In addition, there were scores of volunteers who worked at the Library with great joy and dedication. But perhaps most of all, it was the support of the public, both in New York itself and across the nation, that gave this great, democratic and constantly evolving institution the chance to face its future with confidence and energy.

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<sup>15</sup> It was my privilege, during my years at the Library, to get to know many great curators and library leaders, such as Lola Szladits, curator of the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature; David Stam, director of the Research Libraries; Edwin Holmgren, director of the Branch Libraries; and Richard De Gennaro, former librarian of the University of Pennsylvania and later of Harvard University, who served as director of The New York Public Library. The Library also had an extraordinary and imaginative group of development officers led by Gregory Long, perhaps the best and most imaginative development leader I've known, who is now the president of the New York Botanical Garden.

However, when I came to the Library in 1981, its fate did not seem so well assured. In fact, as Andrew Heiskell so bluntly wrote in his book, *Outsider, Insider: An Unlikely Success Story*,<sup>16</sup> "The library was broke"—and it showed.

### Support for "The People's Palace"

With so much goodwill directed toward the Library, why, then, was it in a state of decline in the 1960s and 1970s? Primarily, I think because it had been taken for granted; it was seen as a constant in New York, a fixture, rather than as an institution that had to be invested in as part of securing the city's future. Libraries, arts programs in the schools, the infrastructure of public buildings—these are always among the first targets of cost-savings measures when a city has to balance its budget, notwithstanding the real and often permanent damage this may do, not only to the programs and institutions, but to the people they serve. This was the case in the 1970s when New York City was going through a deep recession. It was shocking, really, and terribly sad to see how far into disrepair the Library had fallen in those years. At the time that I assumed the presidency, there was talk of bankruptcy, of selling some of the Library's collections, closing some branches or charging admission. Hours of operation had been scaled back; dust, grime and decay were winning the battle to destroy the beautiful marble and woodwork; books were being kept out of circulation because there wasn't the manpower to catalogue them; older volumes were crumbling to dust because funding for conservation measures wasn't available. Outside, the building looked shabby and neglected. Bryant Park, directly behind the Library, was a dark and derelict place, particularly unsafe at night. The rich holdings of the Library and the dedication of the librarians,

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<sup>16</sup> Marian-Darien Press, 1998.

their professionalism and their expertise were the main forces keeping the Library an ongoing, viable, central institution.

Our first task at the Library was to reaffirm and highlight the centrality of The New York Public Library in the life of the city and of the nation. The message that the staff and Board and I, along with the Library's many supporters, were eager to get out was that the Library was not begging for help—it *deserved* not only to have its infrastructure restored and replenished and all its services reinstated, it also *deserved* a better and more secure future, because its well-being reflected the vibrance and sustainability of the city itself. If the Library was allowed to continue to decline, then the city would also be seen as moving backwards, as well. After all, the people of New York and all Americans were the real owners of the Library because it existed to serve them, to provide a great archive of knowledge and education open and free to all.

In regard to “getting the message out,” one of the most important decisions we made at the Library was prompted by my belief—shared by the staff and the Board—that democracy and excellence are not mutually exclusive; in regard to the Library, that translated into a conviction that public institutions can have both high visibility and high standards. With that in mind, we set out to make the Library's cause everybody's cause, and we made that cause not simply about survival but about the *quality* of the Library's survival. It would not be enough simply to keep the doors open: those doors had to lead to the most thorough, wide-ranging and eclectic collection of knowledge and information—both probing deep into the past and poised on the cutting edge of tomorrow—that human beings were capable of amassing.

Furthermore, like all its sister libraries across the nation, the Library had to adapt to changing times by embracing and utilizing all the new technologies that were becoming available—which meant not only finding the money to provide the budget for these innovations but also effectively and smoothly incorporating them into the institution's daily operations. And in an age when individuals were testing out their newfound ability to access knowledge and information online, bypassing institutions such as the Library, we had to prove to the public that the Library had not become irrelevant; that it was, in fact, among the most modern and contemporary of institutions.

In that regard, we were proud to underscore another aspect of the Library's significance to an evolving society: its unwavering commitment to the rights of its users. The Library has always stood—as it stands today, along with the 117,000 other libraries in the United States including 9,000 public libraries—as a guardian of Americans' right of free inquiry and to the privacy of their searches for information. In fact, the protection of these rights has been codified by the American Library Association, which says in the *Library Bill of Rights*, “Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.” Further, the *Bill of Rights* states, “Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.”<sup>17</sup> The Council of the American Library Association

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<sup>17</sup> *Libraries: The First Amendment and Cyberspace*, by Robert S. Peck (American Library Association, 2000).

has also reaffirmed the right of privacy, issuing a strong recommendation that libraries across the U.S. “Formally adopt a policy which specifically recognizes its circulation records and other records identifying the name of library users to be confidential in nature,” and that they “Advise all librarians and library employees that such records shall not be made available to any agency of state, federal, or local government...”<sup>18</sup>

We went about our mission of telling the Library’s story in many ways, illustrating how it affected the lives of children, immigrants, and “ordinary citizens,” as well as the scholars, writers, scientists, artists, and all the others who would have been lost without this irreplaceable library. We also pointed out that, pre-Internet, The New York Public Library served as the morgue for many newspapers including *The New York Times* that did not have a back-issues archives open to the public.<sup>19</sup> We told publishers that we were one of their most important links to the public, because people who learn, through libraries, to love reading, are future buyers of books. And we told everybody who would listen that, as Andrew Carnegie said, the free library “is the cradle of democracy.”

This was a message that resonated, that everyone seemed to understand. There was little doubt that the Library deserved the time, attention and financial contributions from everyone who could afford even the smallest measure of support. We could not have spread our message as far and wide as we did without the assistance of the media—news-

papers, magazines, television stations—and especially, without the help of *The New York Times*, which took up the Library’s cause in a big way. Indeed, at times it seemed there was so much coverage of the Library in the paper, with stories appearing almost daily, that Abe Rosenthal, the editor of the *Times*, complained to Arthur Gelb, the managing editor—not necessarily jokingly—that there must have been something wrong with the paper because a whole day had passed without the *Times* publishing a story about the Library. I should note here that Arthur Gelb did not have to prod the reporters, however: even the jaded and blasé New York press corps got caught up in the Library’s struggle to reestablish itself as central to the life of the city and the nation. *The New York Daily News*, the *New York Post*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Women’s Wear Daily*, even *Rolling Stone*, not to mention scores of fashion magazines and journals dealing with libraries, the arts, and culture, all featured positive, supportive features about the Library because it was *their* Library as much as anybody else’s.

It wasn’t just the press, or just wealthy and eminent individuals who came to the aid of the Library. A study by Independent Sector has revealed that, contrary to conventional wisdom, low-income people donate a disproportionately larger percentage of their income than do the wealthy, which comes as no surprise to me because I certainly found this to be the case in regard to the Library. One of the most moving donations that ever came over our transom was a Social Security check sent from the resident of a nursing home who enclosed a note that said, essentially, “I don’t have much money, but this is my tribute to the Library.” One of the most surprising gifts was from the person who left us one million dollars in his will because, he said, he didn’t like the government and didn’t want his money to end up with them.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> It is important to note here that today—hard as it may seem for some to believe—there are still millions upon millions of pages of archival records and documents as well as recordings, visual images and other material that have not been digitized and are not stored in any electronic media or available online; it is the responsibility of libraries to continue to preserve these materials so they are available to future generations.

Over the years, at the annual public holiday party we held at the Library, I stood at the door along with Mrs. Astor, Andrew Heiskell, Richard Salomon and other Trustees to greet thousands of patrons—the citizens of New York, whom I called the true stockholders of The New York Public Library—and was greeted, in turn, with many envelopes holding small contributions and large checks. It was like people were attending a wedding, a bar mitzvah or a christening.

Writers were also important stockholders in the Library, so to extend “the right of ownership” to them we created the Literary Lions evening, which was really the handiwork of Richard Salomon and philanthropist and Estée Lauder Company executive Leonard Lauder. This was also a way to link “high society” to philanthropy since, in bringing writers and benefactors together, we made clear that the wealthy should consider it a privilege to host a table in honor of an author at an event celebrating the city’s and nation’s most important literary figures. The writers were clearly the celebrities at the event, and their star rose even higher by being included in the circle of Literary Lions. In fact, there were no speakers and no introductions at the Literary Lions dinners because, considering both the writers and society figures in the room, *everybody* was somebody. Instead, we had prominent actors and actresses read classic passages from prominent authors.

The event started out with twenty-one distinguished writers acting as hosts to twenty-one tables for dinner and the cost to benefactors was \$10,000; it became such a success that we eventually raised the price to \$25,000. The media coverage was so extensive that it brought forth many requests to underwrite the costs of the decorations, beverages and food as well as

pressure from prominent individuals who were eager to sponsor a table.

One major outcome of the Literary Lions—an event that was later imitated throughout the country—was that the author and biographer Barbara Goldsmith helped to establish a preservation laboratory at the Library (which now operates under the banner of the Barbara Goldsmith Conservation and Preservation Division) and galvanized the most influential writers of our time on behalf of a campaign for the use of acid-free paper to ensure that books last through the generations. Later, Goldsmith also became a Trustee of the Library.

The Library Trustees, staff and I were grateful, gratified, humbled and thrilled by how people rose to our cause and honored “The People’s Palace,” a term coined by some of us but popularized by Norman Mailer, among others. Still, there were times when some of my colleagues and I felt discouraged or weighed down by how challenging it was to meet the aspirations of the public and their many needs. On such occasions, my recommended remedy for that feeling was simply to walk into the Library’s Main Reading Room, and the sight of hundreds of readers and researchers bent over the tables lit by Tiffany lamps, books and papers in hand, would provide a shot of instant adrenalin. Often, one could see several generations of one family—a grandparent, a parent and a child or two—reading and studying in the Library at the same time.

I don’t mean to minimize the difficulties that we faced in turning around the fortunes of the Library, but to provide some context for the contrast between the wonderful, hopeful days we all experienced and the difficult ones, too. Dealing with the public sector, for example,

was extremely taxing. Government on every level is confronted by so many needs, from so many quarters, that it was difficult to show how the Library—no matter how deserving it was—could be seen as more worthy of support than so many other institutions, organizations and individuals, many of those in dire straits. Still, we did try to make our case by giving hours of testimony before the City Council, the Board of Estimate and community boards. And then, of course, we went through the annual ritual we engaged in with the city government: first, the mayor would cut the Library's budget. Then, volunteers working on behalf of the Library would collect thousands of signatures from people in every borough demanding that the cuts be restored and present these petitions to City Hall. Finally, the City Council would put back into the budget the money that the Mayor had removed. It was a brutal process but gratifying, in the end, because it was clear to the city's officials that those who loved our Library were also voters, and attention had to be paid to how they thought the city's resources should be apportioned.

Still, I learned an important lesson from participating in "funding battles" with the city. Because New York City, as I noted earlier, actually has three separate library systems; if we competed against each other for funding, we all lost. The best way to handle our different needs was to meet beforehand and settle any competitive problems that might exist among us in terms of funding needs so that we could present a unified front to the city once we entered into negotiations. We learned not to air any disagreements we might have had in public. I remember, once, even surprising city bureaucrats by declaring, "Give more money to Queens!" That kind of collegiality and solidarity gave all our requests for funding more authority.

In terms of funding, another important lesson to be learned was that while touting the economic benefit of maintaining institutions such as museums and libraries is a wonderful idea, pushing the economic end of the argument for the value of such institutions should not come at the expense of their intrinsic social, cultural and educational value. Economic rewards may indeed accrue to a city, state, or nation from having extraordinary public institutions, but they should not be counted on or be narrowly perceived as economic engines only. That is not the purpose for which they were created nor the ultimate goal that they should be striving for.

Additionally, I came to believe that, in terms of funding institutions such as the Library, while lump sum additions to budgets are fine, what is best is that financing be provided on the basis of a formula—the way that Social Security payments are determined, for example. Lump sums can be subtracted from at someone's whim or during periods of economic downturn. Formulas are faceless and enduring and often less subject to being tampered with.

All in all, the renaissance of The New York Public Library was a triumph of public-private partnership. Initially, the public sector thought they had given us what amounted to a hunting license by telling the Library that in order to get public funding, first we had to show them what kind of money we could raise from the private sector. Because we were so successful in raising private support, we transformed the city's hunting license into a compact between the city and our institution, showing that indeed, public funds spent to maintain and improve The New York Public Library would be matched many times over by private support, not only in the form of money but also by those who gave their collections to us to house at the Main Library on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and by

those who contributed to the branch libraries around the city. During my tenure, through public and private generosity, we raised \$327 million for the Library (not including more than \$100 million in gifts-in-kind), but the amount of money wasn't nearly as significant as the fact that, in time, the entire engine of the city and its resources—government, corporations and citizens—was mobilized on behalf of the Library and committed to its future.

### The Impact of Philanthropy

My years at the University of Pennsylvania had exposed me to the extraordinary breadth and range of American philanthropy, but heading The New York Public Library thrust me into the midst of intense and intimate encounters with individual philanthropists and philanthropic families, as well as with a number of the nation's major foundations. Interacting with those who were among the most prominent and committed philanthropists in the nation left a lasting impression on me in terms of the culture of New York City and America, which promotes not only the act but the duty of giving—along with the genuine joy of helping a cause that one deeply and profoundly believes in.

I used to say—and still deeply believe—that the only institutions capable of giving or guaranteeing some measure of earthly immortality are museums and libraries. Buildings do not last. Streets and the names given them don't last. Even cemeteries, which are meant to last, have an ephemeral quality—after all, few people visit them on a regular basis for any reason other than to mourn. In that connection, the documentary filmmaker Ken Burns has helped to popularize a favorite expression of mine—namely, that museums and libraries are the DNA of our civilization. They are the embodiment of the individual and collective

memory of mankind, the record of human endeavor, open to all who wish to pass through their doors.

Based on these premises, we undertook a campaign that marshaled historical, moral, ethical, populist, idealistic and progressive arguments in support of the Library. Therefore, instead of seeing ourselves as supplicants for the Library, we viewed ourselves as promoting people's partnership with The New York Public Library. After all, supporting the Library was one of the few causes in our society that was both non-controversial and ecumenical at the same time. Being a supporter of the Library was, in a sense, being a supporter of history, of knowledge, of education, of culture and of learning and democracy. We were convinced that everyone would be in agreement about that. After all, even Lenin had praised The New York Public Library; in 1913, after reading the Library's first annual report, he wrote an editorial for *Pravda* in which he suggested that what Russia needed was a similar institution where citizens would have free access to information and knowledge...

Almost everyone we approached about supporting the Library responded with extraordinary generosity. There were members of families who have a legendary history of philanthropy, such as the Rockefellers, notably David and Laurence. And Mrs. Astor, of course, who provided support not only through her own personal philanthropy but also through the Vincent Astor Foundation.<sup>20</sup> Other philanthropic families whose members were major supporters of the Library included the Gottesman sisters, Joy, Celeste and Miriam and their spouses. They supported the Library through various Gottesman family founda-

<sup>20</sup> The Vincent Astor Foundation, created in 1948, intentionally spent down its funds and was closed by Brooke Astor in 1997.

tions and funds,<sup>21</sup> as well as Irene Diamond who headed the Aaron Diamond Foundation after the death of her husband in 1984.<sup>22</sup> In addition, there were those who gave because of both a deep commitment to what they felt was their civic duty combined with a sense of gratitude for the opportunities that The New York Public Library had provided to them. These included the Wallace Foundation, which became faithful supporters of the Library, because DeWitt and Lila Wallace had used the Library's resources when they began condensing books and articles for *Reader's Digest*. In fact, the DeWitt Wallace Periodicals Room was restored to its turn-of-the-century glory with Wallace funding. Another example was Bill Blass, who became the first fashion designer to be named a Trustee of The New York Public Library. He began his association with the Library in 1984, when Richard Salomon invited him to help organize a Literary Lions fund-raising event. He later left the Library \$10 million, one of the largest gifts it had ever received at that time. Blass said, "Growing up in a little town in Indiana during the Depression, books and the local library were an important part of my life. I'm a visual person; that's my profession, but books are my passion."<sup>23</sup>

21 A 1981 grant of \$1.25 million from the D.S. and R. H. Gottesman Foundation allowed The New York Public Library to refurbish its main exhibition hall, which had not been used for displays since World War II. The hall is now called the D. Samuel and Jeane R. Gottesman Exhibition Hall, in honor of businessman and philanthropist D. Samuel Gottesman and his wife Jeane. In 1987, another neglected part of the Library, a beautiful domed space that had fallen into use as a warehousing area, was reopened as the Celeste Bartos Forum, after grants from Celeste Gottesman Bartos and her husband Armand helped to restore it for public use. Miriam (Gottesman) and Ira D. Wallach provided support for The New York Public Library's Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, which bears their name. Joy Gottesman Ungerleider-Mayerson was a major benefactor of the Library's Dorot Jewish Division.

22 Irene Diamond passed away in 2003 at the age of 92. In the ten years between 1987 and 1996, when it closed after spending its assets, the Aaron Diamond Foundation gave away over \$220 million to more than 700 New York City organizations.

23 "Bill Blass Gives \$10 Million to Library," *The New York Times*, January 13, 1994.

## Widened Horizons

In retrospect, my eight-and-a-half years as president of The New York Public Library broadened my outlook—as I'm sure it would have for anyone in a similar position—on education and connected me with America's national institutions, and with the world, in general, in a way that the years I had spent as a teacher and academic administrator in California, Texas and Pennsylvania<sup>24</sup> had not. My horizons were widened. Any sense of regional parochialism that may have lingered in my consciousness had now dissipated. After sailing forth into the vast ocean of social, cultural, political and educational life that is New York City, it was impossible to retain any sense of insularity or isolation, or to return to a smaller world or hold a smaller worldview. Over time, New York nationalized, even internationalized many individuals like me: as the oft-quoted saying goes, "The journey was just as important as the destination," and in my case, in terms of what I learned from my relationship with the Library—and my stewardship of that remarkable institution—that was certainly true.

In fact, I would say that in a sense I began to see America through the prism of my experiences at The New York Public Library. The swirl of political, social, cultural, ethnic and educational dynamics that I dealt with on a daily basis revealed America to me in all its complexity and diversity—through personal as well as institutional contacts—with such impact that I knew I would be forever affected by what I had been exposed to. Perhaps one of the most important lessons I learned was that, as an academic administrator, I had spent my time focusing on whatever issue or problem I had to deal with immediately, often without

24 Elsewhere, such as in my autobiography, *The Road to Home*, I have discussed my career at San Francisco State College, the University of California at Los Angeles and the University of Texas at Austin.

considering or even understanding the larger context that surrounded whatever the issue was. But the Library taught me to always keep my mind and my eyes open to everything, from small nuances to the big picture, and to keep learning as much as I could, because everything I learned had value.

While at the Library, my experiences were broadened by serving on the Boards of a number of nonprofits. I joined the Boards of only those nonprofits that I felt I could contribute to and that, in turn, would advance my learning process: I was eager to understand all I could about both the superstructure and the infrastructure of our society. I was especially interested in serving those nonprofit groups that interacted with local government so that I could get a real bird's-eye view of how state and municipal governments work. Of course, I also learned a great deal about how federal agencies such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities relate to and work with institutions such as the Library. In a sense, then, The New York Public Library proved to be the best real-world civic, political and institutional education I could have ever gotten, because at every level—city, state and federal—there were organizations or agencies that had an impact on how effective the Library could be on both a day-to-day and long-term basis, and to what extent it could carry out its mission.

By 1988, after more than eight years of intense work, I felt that the Library's renewal was on track by the measures of progress we had undertaken on its behalf. Its fund-raising efforts were a success; the Library had a great administrative team in place and a great Board of Trustees. Its relationships with the city, the state and federal agencies were exemplary and the Library's physical infrastructure had been

restored. Thanks to Marshall Rose and Andrew Heiskell, even Bryant Park was in the process of being reborn as a safe and beautiful garden spot in the middle of the city that could be enjoyed by casual strollers, lunchtime diners and even used for major cultural and civic events.

Much had been accomplished. We had made the revitalization and restoration of the Library a model for libraries across the country. As I reflected on all this, I recalled a saying that was then in circulation: "When you are on a journey and you reach the station called Success, get off."

I felt that at the Library, we had reached that station. It was time to move on. I received the concurrence and approval of the Board for my decision, and we worked together to pave the way for transition. Under the leadership of Elizabeth Rohatyn, Marshall Rose and Samuel Butler, the Library was strong enough to attract new leaders, first the late Father Timothy Healy and later, Paul LeClerc.<sup>25</sup>

Elsewhere,<sup>26</sup> I have discussed the opportunities and challenges that I faced in moving ahead. Naturally, when one had been the president of any major national institution—in my case, The New York Public Library—one faces serious problems when seeking a new career. In particular, in this age of leaks and gossip, when confidentiality and privacy seem to have lost any meaning, it is important to be very careful about reacting to job "offers" where one's name has really just been speculated about to fill a particular position. One does not want to be perceived as having been "turned down" for job or to have been considering an offer that was subsequently withdrawn. This has nothing at all to do with

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<sup>25</sup> In 1989, the late Father Timothy Healy became president of The New York Public Library. He was succeeded by Paul LeClerc in 1993.

<sup>26</sup> *The Road to Home*, op cit.

ego or self-protection but with the reputation of the institution one is leaving; its former or soon-to-be-former president must not be perceived as somehow being a lesser light than any other candidate for a new post. If an institution is not serious about a job offer or signals that “the fit” is not right, the candidate should be given ample opportunity to withdraw his or her name. Otherwise, one’s position in one’s institution becomes untenable, not to mention the danger to one’s reputation. In my case, my candidacy for new positions was put forward by others, which is my recommendation for how to proceed in such instances. That way, if a particular position is not offered, it is the individual proposing the candidate who, in effect, is turned down, not the candidate him/herself.

I was eager to return to academia and to teaching. I felt that I had a renewed sense of purpose: I wanted to participate in helping to prepare the next generation of American leaders. In that connection, three outstanding opportunities arose: the presidency of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation as well as the presidencies of two great universities—one public and one private: the University of Michigan and Brown University. Having spent over eight years as the president of The New York Public Library, I was leaning toward another major public institution—the University of Michigan, with its three campuses: Ann Arbor, Flint and Dearborn.

Since I did yearn to teach, the choice was between the two universities, but I agonized over which to choose. I engaged in an intense debate with myself. In regard to the University of Michigan, it seemed to me that the land-grant institutions were gradually being transformed into “semi-public” universities. For example, in the late 1980s, less than fifty percent of the university’s funding came from

the state. Federal dollars, philanthropic gifts, alumni giving and steep tuition fees had helped the University of Michigan become a formidable public/private university. What was at stake, I thought, was to see how much of the “public” component could be preserved in this public university. I was honored to learn that according to the search committee’s opinion, my experience at the University of Pennsylvania, but more importantly, at The New York Public Library, had given me the credentials to be a defender of the rights of public institutions and I was eager to do so. The University of Michigan faced tremendous challenges, and when they offered me the presidency, I was excited and ready to take them on.

As for Brown, the third oldest college in New England and the seventh oldest in the U.S., it, too, faced enormous challenges: it had the lowest endowment in the Ivy League, was roughly the size of the Faculty of the Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania, and was struggling to maintain a proper balance between its undergraduate and graduate programs, its academics and its athletics, and the preservation of a historic campus while meeting the needs for renovation and modernization. Those who advised me to accept the Brown presidency, including Richard Salomon, who was chancellor of the university, believed that I could help to take Brown to the next level of excellence. For that reason, as well as other professional and personal family considerations, I made the decision to accept the presidency of Brown University.<sup>27</sup> Over the next nine years, I had a chance to see if my decision was right.

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<sup>27</sup> For a further discussion of the reasons for choosing Brown University, see *The Road to Home*, op cit.




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## Brown University

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When I arrived at Brown, it was no secret that in terms of its finances, it was the weakest of the Ivy League institutions. I wasn't too worried about this because The New York Public Library, and the University of Pennsylvania, had prepared me not to dwell on financial weaknesses and perceived limitations but on possibilities and potentialities. I was eager to tackle Brown's problems, just as I had at The New York Public Library. I quickly came to love Brown the way I loved the story of David and Goliath, because it was competing with some of the best higher education institutions in the United States, and attempting to keep pace with them. Even though Brown had limited resources, it had unlimited human aspirations. At the time, I likened Brown to the nation of Japan, which is slightly smaller in area than the state of California and has few natural resources other than its proximity to the sea—and yet, because of its human talent and the imagina-

tion and will of its population, as well as their work ethic and dedication to education—has made itself into an economic giant and a real player on the world stage. That same kind of self-confidence, imagination and daring seemed to me to be the hallmark of Brown.

What I also loved about Brown was that it was a university where every professor actually *taught*. They did justice to their title, professor: they professed. And they didn't approach teaching as a "load"—it was a responsibility and a privilege. Brown did not have a research faculty, a graduate faculty and an undergraduate faculty, but just one faculty for one cohesive student body. Professors were certainly devoted to their research but also to the depth and quality of their teaching. This true dedication to teaching students fit with my vision of a university, which was—and is—that the faculty is the heart and soul, the bone marrow and blood of the university that shapes the character and strengthens the foundations of the institution.

The students, faculty and staff seemed almost *sassy* to me, and I knew that the university had the qualities of imagination and daring to be great. Yes, its resources were limited, but in terms of human talent, imagination, dedication, and work ethic on the part of students and faculty, it seemed to me that Brown excelled. During my time at the university (1989-1997), I often thought of the saying that a great tradition can be inherited, but greatness itself must be won. In that same vein, the mantle of excellence must also be earned, again and again, over time. In other words, as Andrew Carnegie once said, no person or institution should rest on the accomplishments of their ancestors alone because then "the most fruitful part of [your] family, like the potato, lies underground."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *The Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie* (Northeastern University Press; Reissue edition, 1986).

Brown had been in the “earning” business for almost two-and-a-half centuries. Upon assuming the presidency, I was deeply aware that Brown owed much of its success to a handful of great leaders in the past, such as Francis Wayland, who was the fourth president of the university, serving from 1827 to 1855. At that time, the institution had three professors, two tutors and only ninety students. Brown’s property consisted of two college buildings, used as lecture rooms and dormitories for students. In 1850, President Wayland wrote that “the college has not for more than forty years received a dollar from public or private benevolence. We have a tolerable college not actually starved but in salutary fear of starvation.”

Wayland, I should note, was a man of many accomplishments: he wrote the first textbook on economics and was among the early curriculum reformers. In fact, Brown remained small and impoverished until the decade after the Civil War. But Wayland recognized early on the need for fundamental change. The college had a rigid curriculum; memorization, tested through daily recitations, was the prevailing form of instruction. Like other American colleges of the period, Brown relied on pedagogic principles and disciplinary rules thought to be appropriate for keeping adolescent boys—by far the largest group of individuals attending the nation’s colleges—in order. Seeking to rescue Brown from its educational doldrums and at the same time make the institution more useful to the city, state and nation, Wayland urged major changes that, in time, came to include a place in the curriculum for science and technology, allowed for student choice in the subjects studied, and established courses in English literature and modern languages. The “New System” he championed, which was detailed

in his famous *Report to the Corporation [of Brown University] on Changes in the System of Collegiate Education*, was much discussed by contemporary educators and has been a key source for twentieth century historians. Aiming to extend education to others than those entering the learned professions, the report proposed changes in the curriculum through which, by adopting “a system of equivalents, we may confer degrees upon a given amount of knowledge, though the kind of knowledge which makes up this amount may differ in different instances,” and offer education to “the agriculturist, the manufacturer, the mechanic, or the merchant.”<sup>29</sup>

For me, Francis Wayland embodied the proof that needs don’t present opportunities: ideas do. Every institution has needs. What distinguishes one institution from another is the leadership’s vision as well as the will, patience and courage to fight for and implement needed reforms or new directions that will serve the institution’s core ideals.

Following the example of Francis Wayland, 119 years later—in 1969—Brown University unveiled a new curriculum. Known as “The Brown Curriculum,” it gave Brown University an advantage over other Ivies: by encouraging students “to study broadly by choosing courses according to their developing interests,”<sup>30</sup> the curriculum attracted bright, self-reliant students from across the nation who wanted to take courses in different fields for the first two years of college, even some with a pass/fail grade, because it was important to them to acquire a broad spectrum of knowledge before they majored in any given subject. Brown’s curriculum was controversial because there were those who felt that it gave students an

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/University\\_Library/exhibits/education/baptist.html](http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/University_Library/exhibits/education/baptist.html)

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean\\_of\\_the\\_College/curriculum/.](http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/curriculum/)

opportunity to avoid taking core courses in math, science, English, history, etc. Since I was a product of Stanford's core curriculum and believed in intellectual cohesion and "high standards," my appointment was welcomed by those commentators who said they were sure that I would "revisit" the curriculum. I did, by instituting a major curricular review, which resulted in measures aimed at improving the guidelines for students and advisors to enable them to choose wisely from the university's broad offerings and other requirements that helped to strengthen the rigor, structure and philosophical foundation of the curriculum while retaining its flexibility. As part of the review we carried out—though I was assured that the curriculum was balanced—I asked to see a record of the courses that an entire class had taken over four years. To the great surprise of many, it turned out that the students had chosen to take math, science and other courses one would have predicted that they would shun. That gave me confidence that Brown's curriculum was not designed to help students avoid certain courses but to provide guidance about their choices.

In the meantime, however, I thought it was important to clarify my educational philosophy and *modus operandi* at the beginning of my presidency rather than reveal it piecemeal throughout my tenure. In that regard, there were two main points I wanted to make: first, that as far as I was concerned, academic freedom cannot, and would not, be violated. Second, that I did not accept demands: petitions, yes; comments, yes; criticism, yes; but not demands, especially nonnegotiable demands, which had been part of the "spring rites" at many universities. But while making these points, I also wanted to be clear that creating an environment where real debate and discussion were welcomed and encouraged was

very important to me. After all, debate, discussion, even controversy, including the struggle between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, have been at the heart of intellectual movements for centuries. Students had to become comfortable with the idea that controversy cannot be avoided; debate cannot be silenced: to do either is to abandon the advancement of knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge, above all else, is the mission of the university, and not all lessons are confined to formal study. Brown's student body was so diverse that in and of itself, it presented an opportunity for learning, meaning that if one's heart and mind were open, it was possible to develop a deep understanding of *other* people, *other* customs, *other* beliefs and *other* ways of looking at life, religion, culture, human relationships, politics, etc. If that can be done, the path to real tolerance is open: the ability to accept and respect humanity's multitude of differences, not because this or that law says you must, but because knowledge has helped you to understand universal values and to build a bridge between yourself and the rest of the world. That notion—of tolerance based on real understanding, and on knowledge, rather than on the more shifting sands of some concept of "political correctness"—was one that I focused on throughout my presidency at Brown and urged the faculty and students to pursue, as well.

It was not just different points of view in the realm of politics that I wanted heard on campus, but also those of religious and ethnic diversity. Toward that end, in 1996, Brown invited the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of Ismaili Muslims, to be the first Muslim to give a baccalaureate address at any American higher education institution. I encouraged public readings of the Bible, the Talmud and the Koran as well as readings from Hindu and other texts that reflected the makeup of

Brown's student body and supported the many religious groups on campus as well as the various chaplaincies.

Nurturing an environment where diversity and integration are the norm is an important role for a university. In the past, it seems to me, there were three areas of society where people from different ethnic groups, classes, religions, races and regions of the world had the opportunity to meet. One was the army, another was the workplace and the third was in public institutions, especially public schools. Since the draft is gone, and both public schools and the workplace are increasingly reluctant to discuss issues of race, religion, and ethnicity (except in terms of adhering to laws and regulations), that leaves the university as a critical venue not only for education and learning but also for acculturation encounters of many sorts. It is also important, in view of the U.S. role as a world power with many international obligations, that the university help to build bridges between the many divergent groups that comprise our own campus communities before we try to build bridges with others abroad. After all, the United States and its universities represent microcosms of humanity, the very essence of the concept *e pluribus unum*, and must provide models for other multinational, multiethnic and multireligious societies.

In preparation for my inauguration as the sixteenth president of Brown University, I had the opportunity to collaborate with the faculty, staff and students to put my ideas into action, I worked for several months on my inaugural speech, which I delivered on April 9, 1989. The inauguration seemed to me to be like a wedding, a ceremony where you're making your vows to the institution instead of to a person, to its values, its past, its present and its future—and to its possibilities. My address

stressed the fact that over the next century, the university and society faced awesome and complex problems. I highlighted three of them. First, the integration of knowledge: "The greatest challenge facing modern society and civilization," I noted, "is how to cope with and how to transform information into knowledge." Second, rededication to the liberal arts: referring to a remark of Justice Felix Frankfurter that "the mark of a truly civilized man is confidence in the strength and security to be derived from an inquiring mind," I explained that is why I believe in the importance of a liberal arts education. Third, mutualism: "More than ever," I told my audience, "we need to recover a sense of the wholeness of human life and understand the human condition. Every human being needs direct personal contact with the great stories, myths and fiction of the human race, an encounter with history in order to begin to know oneself and to sense the potentialities that lie within one's reach and the reach of other human beings."

I concluded by reaffirming my conviction that ignorance is a sin; it deprives the individual of knowledge and autonomy and dignity. Education, learning and scholarship constitute acts of faith in the continuity of humanity. They honor the past and serve as a witness to the future. After all, the business of education is the creation of the future. It was with all these ideas in mind that I began my tenure at Brown.

### **What Makes a University a University?**

It probably goes without saying that a university is an extraordinarily complex organization. An apt analogy is to think of the university as a kind of mini city-state which, as was long ago elucidated by Aristotle, was the most complete community, because it was supposed to be self-sufficient and existed for the benefit of

its citizens.<sup>31</sup> The comparison remains timely because universities, like city-states, have their own governance, structure, organization, autonomy, regulations, culture and mores, and their own history and identity. Both also have streets, roads and buildings to maintain; they have an entertainment “industry” to operate—with dozens of sports teams, choirs, orchestras, theaters, magazines, performances, and the like—and they have newspapers, radio and television stations, publishing enterprises, “propaganda” machinery, security forces, unions, governing bodies, revenue systems, “taxation” in the form of tuition hikes and fees, housing, health and career services, artists, scientists in labs making discoveries, development officers in the business of “revenue enhancement,” bookstores—the analogies can go on and on. They even have their own judicial processes, which often are at variance with the established legal system of a city, state or country. An example of this is the student handbook of Plymouth State University in New Hampshire, which describes this quite clearly: *A University’s judicial system is not a court of law. The two systems are independent, have a different purpose, process, standard used to determine responsibility, and sanctioning philosophy. While some procedural elements may seem similar the University judicial system is founded on educational philosophies.*<sup>32</sup> And, like a city-state, universities are subject to demonstrations, strikes and protests about everything from the salaries of workers to national and international issues that students may want the university

31 “Since we see that every city-state is a sort of community and that every community is established for the sake of some good (for everyone does everything for the sake of what they believe to be good), it is clear that every community aims at some good, and the community which has the most authority of all and includes all the others aims highest, that is, at the good with the most authority.” Aristotle. *Politics. Books I and II*. Clarendon Aristotle Series (Oxford University Press 1995). I.1.1252a1-7.

32 Plymouth State University Student Handbook, <http://www.plymouth.edu/stulife/handbook/judicial/>.

to take a stand on, one way or another (as was often the case during the Vietnam era or with respect to apartheid in South Africa or civil rights in the U.S., not to mention, currently, the war in Iraq).

Clearly, then, since the university is such a complex organization, the presidency is among the most complicated tasks an individual can ever take on. Those who have accepted the challenge have had some interesting things to say about it. Among them was Henry Wriston, who served as president of Brown University from 1937 to 1955. In portraying the president’s job, he wrote: “The president is expected to be an educator, to have been at some time a scholar, to have judgment about finance, to know something about construction, maintenance, and labor policy, to speak virtually continuously in words that charm and never offend, to take bold positions with which no one will disagree, to consult everyone, and to follow all proffered advice, and do everything through committees, but with great speed and without error.”

These expectations, it should be noted, are not limited to the leaders of private universities. Clark Kerr, who was president of the University of California from 1958 to 1967, gave a similar description: “The American university president is expected to be a friend of the students, a colleague of the faculty, a good fellow with the alumni, a sound administrator with the Trustees, a good speaker with the public, an astute bargainer with the foundations and the federal agencies, a politician with the state legislature, a friend of industry, labor and agriculture, a persuasive diplomat with donors, a champion of education, generally... a spokesman to the press, a scholar in his own right, a public servant at the state and national levels, a devotee of opera and football equally, a decent human being, a good husband and father... He

should be firm, yet gentle, sensitive to others, insensitive to himself; look to the past and the future, yet be firmly planted in the present; he should be both visionary and sound, affable, yet reflective... a good American but ready to criticize the status quo fearlessly; a seeker of truth, where the truth may not hurt too much; a source of public policy pronouncements when they do not reflect on his own institution." What can happen to a president who seeks to fill every role that everyone on campus and off wishes to see him or her play is a metamorphosis into a kind of glad-hander who is not fully in charge of the university's direction or directing its mission. That does nobody any good and diminishes the office holder. In the words of John Silber, president of Boston University from 1971 to 1996, "Presidents who turn the most important and most difficult tasks of university administration over [to others] are unworthy of the title of president."<sup>33</sup>

For the president of a university as well as other administrators, one of the most critical challenges is finding ways to rise above the daily problems and routine in order to keep working toward the ultimate goal of fulfilling the university's mission without being bogged down by the mechanics of *how* things will get done. Not only must a successful university president understand and identify what the essential issues and tasks are, he or she must be able to mobilize all the university stakeholders—students, faculty, alumni and staff, not to mention Trustees—around these common concerns and a shared vision of the university and the goals to be achieved. First, of course, the president has to help promote a university culture in which each member of the community *considers* him or herself to be a stakeholder, so that more than just benefiting

from the institution for one reason or another, he or she takes responsibility for its future and its well-being. Equally important is that goals established for the university must be achievable, and that plans to achieve them must be realistic; otherwise these will remain only pipe dreams. What's more, plans should have well-thought-out implementation provisions and timetables; if one goes forward without a good set of blueprints at the ready, progress will be sporadic and failure may result, thus contributing to cynicism about the university's goals and the administration's ability to ever reach them. In fact, being able to manage cynicism is one of the hallmarks of leadership. That is why great visions have to be accompanied by achievable benchmarks and measurable accomplishments. This can be difficult for many reasons, but particularly because change of any kind often generates conflict. Some university presidents decide they want to avoid conflict at any cost. But risks must be taken, even those that involve a president staking his or her reputation—and job—on the outcome. In such cases, if one believes in one's vision and the soundness of the plan of action that has been decided upon, then no other course can, or should, be followed. After all, it is easy to be mediocre. Excellence, on the other hand, exacts a steep price in the form of time, dedication, patience and hard work—and sometimes in the face of organized opposition.

Naturally, these issues can be further complicated by the fact that universities don't exist in a vacuum. Universities are part of a larger community and they both affect and are affected by the politics, culture, people and environs with which they interact. In some regions, as manufacturing declines, colleges and universities become even more socially and economically important. Hence, it's necessary for universities and their leadership to be con-

<sup>33</sup> "The Transformation of the Modern President," by David Sherfinski, *The Yale Herald*, April 24, 2006.

stantly and appropriately sensitive about how to coexist with and be supportive of their urban and rural communities. It is, in part, for these reasons that universities like Yale, Columbia, Clark, and the University of Pennsylvania (which is the largest employer in the Philadelphia area) have embarked upon economic, social and educational programs that connect them with and serve their communities in order to maintain the kind of positive relationships that are necessary for both the university and the community to thrive. Brown, for example, has been integrally involved in the Providence Plan, which was established in 1992 to contribute to urban renewal and economic and cultural development in Providence, Rhode Island, improve the city's public schools, and contribute to local development.

Competition with other higher education institutions also influences many elements of how a university functions, how it perceives itself and is perceived by others, even what its policies and educational offerings are—indeed, almost every area of university life may be affected by concerns about competition. The influence of market forces on a higher education community that is part public, part private, and includes both nonprofit and profit-making institutions, only continue to grow. Colleges and universities compete for students, faculty, athletic titles, revenue, rankings and prestige,<sup>34</sup> a process that in some instances may distort the true public aim of higher education, which is to produce educated citizens whose lives will be productive and rewarding, for themselves certainly, but also for the larger society.

For a university and its leaders, therefore, it's important to put competition into perspective: what is its aim? What is the competition

for? How can it serve the university's overall mission and its goals? How can it help to define the unique contributions that a particular university is able to make, not only to its students and faculty, but to the wider community, as well? That last question is critical, because the diversity of our higher education system is one factor that gives it great strength. Individual institutions have traditionally emphasized different functions and have complemented each other by meeting different local, regional, national and international needs—by providing educational opportunities to a diverse population, by expanding scientific and technical knowledge, and by offering pathways for continuing education.

In the years to come, however, competition in terms of higher education may not be simply a matter of American colleges and universities jostling for position on a “best colleges and universities” list. The specter of international competition looms on the horizon—particularly in our post-9/11 era, where security concerns, along with increased tension between many countries around the globe and the United States, as well as the immigration issues that have made it difficult for foreign students to obtain visas, have fed a decline in foreign student enrollment, down nearly 3 percent since the 2001-2002 academic year.<sup>35</sup> The number of undergraduate students enrolled in 2003-2004 actually fell by some 5 percent, according to the *Open Doors 2004* report, published by the Institute of International Education.<sup>36</sup> Graduate enrollment is also suffering. A survey by the Council of Graduate Schools, released in March 2006, reported that while in

<sup>34</sup> *The Future of Higher Education: Rhetoric, Reality, and the Risks of the Market*, by Frank Newman, Lara Couturier and Jamie Scurry (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., published by Jossey-Bass, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> “USA losing its advantage drawing foreign students,” *USA Today*, January 5, 2006.

<sup>36</sup> One hopes that the 2006 survey by the Institute indicates a possible reversal of this trend: the number of new foreign students at American colleges and universities increased eight percent in fall 2006 compared to fall 2005.

the 2006 academic year the number of foreign students who applied to American graduate programs increased by 11 percent from the year before, reversing two years of decline, that number is still lower than in the years before 2003. In 2003-2004, for example, the number of foreign students applying to U.S. graduate programs decreased by 28 percent and by an additional 5 percent in the following academic year.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, however, another report, again from the Institute of International Education, notes that the number of American students studying in foreign countries totaled nearly 206,000 in 2004-2005, an eight percent increase over the previous year. While in 2002-2003 about two-thirds of those U.S. students attended universities in Europe, enrollments in Latin American universities increased by 14 percent to 27,000. Enrollments in Africa (nearly 5,000) and Oceania—mainly Australia and New Zealand—rose some 16 percent to nearly 13,000.<sup>38</sup>

One also should not overlook the impact of rising tuitions at American colleges and universities, along with the reluctance of some nations to “invest” in American higher education without a guarantee of a return on their investment when their students eventually come home and contribute to national development. In addition, as English increasingly becomes the lingua franca of the world, American universities now face increasing competition from England, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and other nations with quality educational programs that can be delivered seamlessly to foreign students fluent enough in English to plunge right into working on whatever degrees

they desire. Furthermore, many private colleges are emerging that have little or no academic history behind them; modeled on profit more than intellectual or academic excellence, they are essentially educational franchises offering teaching and learning that, in many cases, may be of dubious quality.

To meet these international challenges, American colleges and universities have responded in a variety of ways, perhaps most notably by initiating or expanding collaborative educational ventures, some of which have been in existence for many years, such as the American University of Beirut, which was founded in 1866 as a private, independent, non-sectarian institution of higher learning, functioning under a charter from the State of New York; the American College of Thessaloniki (formerly Anatolia College), founded in 1886 and incorporated under the laws of the State of Massachusetts in 1984; and the American University in Cairo, founded in 1919. More recently, a number of new universities have been established such as the American University in Bulgaria, the American University in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakh-American University, and the American University of Armenia. Other strategies include building extensions of American university campuses abroad. Perhaps one of the best examples of this is Education City in Qatar, where Cornell University has become the first American university to offer its M.D. degree outside the U.S.; Carnegie Mellon offers undergraduate business and computer science degree programs, and other universities such as Georgetown University and Texas A&M have also established programs. In other examples, the Hopkins Nanjing Center, located on the campus of China’s Nanjing University and jointly administered by both the Johns Hopkins and Nanjing universities, offers both certificate and degree programs. Stanford Uni-

37 *Findings from 2006 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase I: Applications*, Council of Graduate Schools, March 2006.

38 “Foreign Students Enrollment Decline for First Time in Generation,” by Jim Lobe, *Commondreams.org* NewsCenter, <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines04/1116-21.htm>.

versity has established itself in Japan; France's graduate business school, INSEAD, has a campus in Singapore, a Regional Research Centre in Israel and is creating a Dual Degree Executive MBA program in conjunction with Tsinghua University in China focused on "building global mindsets" for "transcultural executives." The United Nations University has thirteen research and training centers around the world; its International Institute for Software Technology has plans to expand throughout Africa and Latin America. (In a related effort, MIT, through its OpenCourseWare program, plans to publish the materials from virtually all of MIT's undergraduate and graduate courses online so they are available to the world.)

These welcome alliances are further strengthened by joint research projects carried out by American universities and institutions abroad, efforts which are in turn reinforced by cooperation among national academies. For example, TWAS (known as the Third World Academy of Sciences until 2004), which is based in Trieste, partners with the African Academy of Sciences, and the National Academy of Sciences in the United States, among others, uniting more than 800 scientists from some 90 countries. As is well known, many foreign leaders have attended American universities, which provides additional incentives to partner with U.S. academic institutions, especially for nations struggling to "catch up" in terms of science and technology or to recover from declines in those areas, as well as economic downslides that occurred during times of political repression or upheaval.

In an unfortunate corollary, it's interesting to note that this same cooperative spirit, which promotes alliances between American universities and international partners, does not seem to thrive domestically. For an American university to establish a partnership with a

foreign university may be seen in the U.S. as a prestigious development, but for an American university to create similar partnerships with other American universities is more the exception than the norm, as at home, it is often seen as a sign of weakness, or at least an indication of deficiencies. This is surprising because, in the United States, cooperation has been one of the hallmarks of our civic society. The late management guru Peter Drucker often noted that the concept of management—which requires cooperation at all levels of an institution or enterprise—originated in our universities and municipal sector. More often, however, as a fellow university president once remarked, "collaboration among universities is an unnatural act performed by non-consenting adults." This is most unfortunate because competition in the short-term can obscure the long-term benefits to be reaped from cooperation.

I have always believed strongly in the need for institutions to cooperate in order to strengthen their ability to do the work they were designed to carry out. At the University of Pennsylvania, when I was both dean and provost, we attempted to form alliances with other universities both within and beyond the Ivy League. But for the most part, those efforts were not successful because while during times of recession or other types of fiscal or operational distress, inter-institutional cooperation may seem like a light at the end of some otherwise endless tunnel, that desire to work together seems to vanish when the pressure is lessened and/or prosperity returns. Why is that? In part, I suppose, because so many institutions—particularly universities—have the same needs in terms of capacity building, human resources and infrastructure, and often find themselves turning to the same sources of support. But perhaps an even larger obstacle is institutional pride: the sense that being the

initiator of a cooperative effort might signal weakness. Also, the notion often arises that one institution might be benefiting more than the other, and that a relationship that appears symbiotic might actually be parasitic, instead. Or perhaps it is just human nature to band together when the going gets tough and then to go one's own way when things get better. I am reminded, for example, of how we quickly formed carpools during the energy crisis of the 1970s when gasoline was hard to come by at any price, but quickly fell back on our habit of relying on our own cars and driving alone when the pipelines began flowing again.

Both at the University of Pennsylvania and later, at Brown University, it was difficult to understand why we could not, for instance, work with other colleges and universities to invite speakers to address our various academic communities. We might, for example, ask an individual who students and faculty at many different campuses would be interested in hearing speak to tour for two or three weeks, while all the institutions shared the costs. On an even more practical level, colleges and universities could also share expenses by jointly ordering supplies such as paper, toner for printers, even pens and pencils, in larger volume, which usually results in an overall savings. But somehow, those proved to be mostly insurmountable challenges in terms of both major issues and minor ones, as well.

Clearly, given all these factors, the time is right to assess and reevaluate the health—and strength—of American higher education without simply assuming that because it has been the best in the past, it will continue to be the best education available in the future. As Derek Bok has noted, “[U]niversities need to recognize the risks of complacency and use the emerging worldwide challenge as an occasion for a candid reappraisal to discover whether

there are ways to lift the performance of our institutions of higher learning to new and higher levels.”<sup>39</sup>

## The Fragmentation of Knowledge

Despite all the challenges they face, America's colleges and universities remain, unquestionably, the most democratic higher education institutions in the world. The American university is popular in the best sense of the term, admitting and educating unprecedented numbers of men and women of every race, age and social class. Students from every imaginable background—and here I speak from personal experience—have found a place in this nation's incredible variety of colleges and universities, public or private, large or small, secular or sectarian. Today, there are approximately 4,000 colleges and universities in our country, including some 1,200 public and private two-year institutions; they enroll more than 14.8 million students and annually grant some two million degrees.

American institutions of higher education continue to play a leadership role in the world, but, as we have seen, their international prominence can no longer be taken for granted. America's intellectual leadership—educators, scholars, scientists, social scientists, humanists, and others—must also become leaders in the area of curricular development and reform. If attention is not paid to the current state of affairs on many American campuses, our nation's colleges and universities will continue to drift in the direction of becoming a “Home Depot” of educational offerings. At the present time, for example, many major research universities often offer up to 1,800 undergraduate courses. Following this approach, there is no differentiation between consumption and

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<sup>39</sup> *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look At How Much Students Learn And Why They Should Be Learning More*, Princeton University Press (2006).

digestion, no difference between information and learning, and often no guidance. Higher education should not be allowed to become an academic superstore of courses that are stacked up like sinks and lumber for do-it-yourselfers to figure out and assemble on their own into something meaningful.

Of course, the fact that this is a problem for our colleges and universities is a reflection of the Information Revolution that may, in the eyes of history, turn out to parallel, even outdo, the impact of the Industrial Revolution. The info-glut has inundated all of us in America, but its most telling effects are on our universities. On campus, the daunting arrival of information in the form of books, monographs, periodicals, films, videos, CDs, DVDs and MP3s has been compounded, in recent years, by an accelerating electronic torrent from millions of web sites and their attendant hyperlinks and databases that exist everywhere at once—at least, everywhere that the Internet can be accessed, which is fast becoming almost every single place on earth. In this regard, it is perhaps interesting to note that J.C.R. Licklider, the head of ARPANET,<sup>40</sup> the precursor to the modern Internet, termed the group of computer specialists he gathered to work on the nascent Net his “intergalactic network,”<sup>41</sup> suggesting his belief that the World Wide Web, when it was finally born, would forge connections beyond and above anything then imaginable. Well, he may have been right, because as more and more of us go online, we are witness to an unprecedented democratization of access to information; hopefully, even to knowledge. While the web of connectivity that the pioneers of the Internet anticipated has indeed developed, it has spawned a troubling corollary:

40 Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) of the U.S. Department of Defense.

41 ARPANET Completion Report, published jointly in 1978 by Bolt, Beranek and Newman (BBN) of Cambridge, Mass. and ARPA.

the continuing fragmentation of knowledge. For the higher education community, this is a particularly serious crisis because the constant, rapid—some say *onslaught*—of information has, by necessity, also brought about the triumph of an age of increasing specialization that has fractured the commonwealth of learning into isolated, silo-like disciplines, which in turn, have splintered into sub-disciplines and sub-sub disciplines and specialties.

This is not a new phenomenon—but its magnitude *is* new. The process of both growth and fragmentation of knowledge underway since the seventeenth century has only accelerated. Writing about the fragmentation of knowledge in the early years of the twentieth century, Max Weber criticized the desiccated narrowness and the absence of spirit of the modern intellectual specialist.<sup>42</sup> It was also this phenomenon of the modern specialist that prompted Dostoevsky to lament in *The Brothers Karamazov* about the scholars who “...have only analyzed the parts and overlooked the whole and, indeed, their blindness is marvelous!” And it was this phenomenon that led José Ortega y Gasset, in his *Revolt of the Masses*, as early as in the 1930s, to decry the “barbarism of specialization.” In modern times, he wrote, we have more scientists, scholars and professional men and women than ever before, but fewer cultivated ones.

Today, the scope and the intensity of specialization is such that scholars and scientists have great difficulty in keeping up with the important yet overwhelming amount of scholarly literature of their own sub-specialties, not to mention their general disciplines. In effect, the university, which our society thinks of as embodying the unity of knowledge, in reality has become an intellectual multiversity

42 *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber (Routledge Classics, 2001).

where students often learn to frame only those questions that can be addressed through the specialized methodologies of their particular disciplines and sub-disciplines. Of course, this is not the direction that the founders of American higher education envisaged. One of the earliest promotional pamphlets about education ever published on the North American continent, a 1643 brochure, stated that the purpose of Harvard College was “To advance Learning and perpetuate it to Posterity.” Now, however, there is a trend toward what the late educator and cultural critic Neil Postman called “technopoly,” namely, “the submission of all forms of cultural life to the sovereignty of technique and technology,”<sup>43</sup> wherein knowledge often recedes and marketable skills become paramount. Postman bemoaned the fact that living in a technopoly has made us a society of technicians and experts, heavily dependent on technology, and we have thereby lost the transcendent sense of the unifying principles and ultimate purpose of knowledge. At the same time, we are also losing the ability to partake of learning and education to the fullest possible extent.

It’s not surprising, therefore, that today, the faculties of our universities are confronted with the difficult choices of balancing not only analysis and synthesis but also methodology and the relevant value of course content, thus placing more and more responsibility on students to form the synthesis. “Specialization,” as noted the late scholar and professor William Bouwsma put it, “instead of uniting human beings into a general community of values and discourse, by necessity has divided them into small and exclusive categories/coteries, narrow in outlook and interest.” This, in turn, in his opinion, tends to isolate and

alienate human beings. “Social relations...are reduced to political relations, to the interplay of competitive and often antagonistic groups. Specialized education makes our students into instruments to serve the specialized needs of a society of specialists.”<sup>44</sup>

Of course, the same information technologies that have been the driving force behind the explosion of information, growth of knowledge and its fragmentation, and hence, the age of specialization, also present us with profoundly integrative tools for meeting the challenge of that fragmentation. When we are not shuddering at the challenge of coping with the info-glut, we must marvel at the way the world’s store of information is increasingly at our fingertips, thanks to such advances as voice recognition software and translation software that automatically translates one language into another. Information scientists—including our high-tech librarians—are also making greater use of digitization, turning information written on paper or recorded in other media into electronic form, and of artificial intelligence to automate information management tasks, including “data mining,” the practice of having a computer continuously monitor and filter information according to set objectives.

This is an exciting age because for the first time in history, individual citizens can gain access to much of the world’s store of knowledge. They can use their desktop, lap-top or hand-held computers to access the Internet, which has become an electronic version of the Library of Alexandria, which was founded in the third century B.C. by Ptolemy 1<sup>st</sup>. That was the first institution based on the premise that all the world’s knowledge could be gathered under one roof—and for nine centuries it was a place of inspiration and scholarship.

<sup>43</sup> *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, by Neil Postman (Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).

<sup>44</sup> William J. Bouwsma, “Models of the Educated Man,” *The American Scholar*, vol. 44, Number 2, Spring 1975.

Today, technology is radically modifying the space/time constraints of communications channels and offering great opportunities for making connections among disciplines and across disciplines. Online communications, for example (web sites, e-mail and the like), have provided new tools and opportunities for the scholarly community to share resources, though we must not forget that while the Internet, satellites and fiber optics have advanced communication, the raw input is still human speech and human ideas. The university remains at the nexus of these developments—the public commons where ideas and technology meet and interact. Thus, the process of assimilating new information technologies can help us think hard and deeply about the nature of knowledge and even about the mission of higher education itself. But progress in using technology to integrate disciplines on campus has often been disappointingly slow. Unless higher education does a better job of teaching students how to synthesize and systematize information, our society faces many problems. In his book, *1984*, George Orwell described a world in which information and true knowledge were denied and propaganda substituted for both. In the twenty-first century, citizens can be denied knowledge by being inundated with mountains of raw and unconnected data. Our faith in computers may also tend to deceive us into thinking that whatever is not in the computer or data bank does not exist. If that were to happen, we would be in danger of being disconnected from archival material, unrecorded oral traditions, un-digitized manuscripts and anything else not placed on the Internet.

Many concerned educators are attempting to find solutions to this dilemma. There are, for example, numerous models for how universities might help students bring some structure to the vast amount of information to which

they are constantly exposed. Thematic seminars and interdisciplinary team teaching are two ideas; others include examples such as an integrated course on the origin of the cosmos that might involve a geologist, an astrophysicist, a mathematician, a philosopher, an expert on religion, and so forth, providing a multi-dimensional view of the subject. Such a course might introduce students to the Ptolemaic, Copernican and Einsteinian views of the earth and the universe, allowing students to become acquainted with critical elements of science, philosophy, history and religion. Another example might be exploring the concept of *agape* and *eros* in several literary traditions including Western, Islamic, Buddhist, and others, which would mean learning about three or more different cultures. One could teach a nuanced and multifaceted sense of how recent events have impacted regions around the globe, bringing together scholars from different disciplines to explore comparative and competing ideas and theories about both recent and historic events.

The above are examples of how one may develop a deeper understanding of certain ideas, topics, and disciplines. This means that colleges and universities must teach students not only what we should know, but also what we don't know, and also discuss what the limitations of knowledge are. This is not a new challenge—it goes way back to the Socratic notion that true knowledge is knowing what you know *and* what you don't know. So while the computer allows us to access more information—faster and in a more usable form—we must keep in mind another of Neil Postman's warnings: "The computer cannot provide an organizing moral framework. It cannot tell us what questions are worth asking"<sup>45</sup> or even why they should be asked.

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45 "Informing Ourselves to Death," speech by Neil Postman given at a meeting of the German Informatics Society on October 11, 1990, in Stuttgart.

## Leadership of an Evolving Institution

While dealing with the many issues—such as those addressed above—that the leadership of a university must confront, it's still essential to keep in mind that the main purpose of a university is to be an educational institution. This does not mean that the university's administration is not also preoccupied with the task of dealing with the many business, economic, legal, social, political and cultural aspects of university life and of the university's interactions with its many constituencies, but these efforts must never overshadow the focus on education. That's why a university exists: to educate people, and in carrying out that mission, the faculty is still its *raison d'être* and its curriculum is its compact with the current generation of students, and with future generations, as well.

The university curriculum is not a menu that can be changed from day to day. In some instances, it has centuries of tradition behind it, and the courses that comprise the curriculum are taught by individuals who are constantly researching and enriching their knowledge of their fields, so their teaching is, and should be, the very essence of the evolution of thought and learning. As a result, there are always times when every university has to reexamine the nature, scope, character and content of its curriculum. Sometimes, of course, curricular changes can't wait; in the case of professional or business schools, for example, courses may have to be adapted to the demands of the marketplace and the expectation of the professions that students are preparing to enter. In other instances, especially in regard to undergraduate general education, there are competing philosophical and methodological schools of thought. There always has been and always will be debate as to what should be taught in order to train not only those going into specific

professions but the “ordinary citizen” student as well—what do they need to know about history, about their society, about their culture, about the culture of others; about values, social mores, not to mention about competing spiritual and religious schools of thought, competing economic theories and systems, and about the evolving global context of just about everything they will be learning during their years in school?

While he was president of Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson is supposed to have observed, “It is easier to transfer an entire cemetery than to change a university curriculum,” and in my experience, he has certainly proven to be correct. Proposed academic changes are not seen by faculty as abstract intellectual arguments or discussions but as vehicles for redistributing the university's resources. They are seen as zero-sum games in which there will be winners and losers because curriculum changes, for example, may dictate “faculty slots,” and hence will engender competition among departments, schools, and many other realms of the university. So, there is great reluctance to accept change unless it is beneficial—in this order—to one's department, one's school, the allies of one's school, one's profession, and then, finally, to the university.

Though curricular leadership is, ultimately, vested in the faculty and is also the responsibility of the university president or his or her provost, the quality of the president's leadership will not be judged by performance in this one area alone. Many factors will contribute to how the president is perceived both inside the university and outside, including what type of leadership route he or she follows. There are, in fact, many different types of leaders: some people choose to lead by persuasion or by winning the confidence of different constituencies. There are other leaders who temporize, follow

the flow and try to keep everyone and everything on an even keel, walking gingerly among competing factions on campus while trying to maintain peace. Focusing on “tranquility,” however, is almost never in the long-term interest of the university. While following such a course of action, the president may ignore serious problems, leaving them for his or her successor to deal with, and may rationalize doing so by suggesting that since the faculty and trustees approved of the presidential actions—or inactions, as the case may be—then the president is not at fault if future administrations have to deal with issues that have been “left behind.”

Other presidents may become overly concerned with their own popularity or legacy, which is also counterproductive for the university. In that connection, I remember that, years ago, I read that one should not be like a flag whose direction is governed by the wind but like the flagpole that provides stability. When presidents go in accordance “with the wind,” trying to gauge the external, internal, or political currents at a university without having a clear educational philosophy or a plan of action, they are following a potentially disastrous course. The integrity of the president’s leadership may suffer and again, the long-term interests of the university are unlikely to be served. I believe it is critical that a university’s various constituencies understand that both the institution’s long- and short-term interests are being taken seriously by those in charge and addressed with great care, honesty, and dedication. This means that the president and the university’s leadership must be in agreement about the fact that they are accountable for the decisions, actions and policies of their administration. They must also be willing to recognize when mistakes have been made and similarly *unwilling* to rationalize failure.

The specter of failure—as well as of potential conflict—can hang over any leader’s administration, especially if one has opted to emphasize “peace at any price” rather than a healthy respect for unavoidable conflict and its equitable resolution. What my experience has taught me is that any source of tension carries with it the potential to isolate those in leadership positions, but that doesn’t have to be the case. When I was a teacher and later, as a university administrator, I believed it was a normal aspect of university life for there always to be conflict—between “old” views and “new” views; between students’ ideas and those of their professors; between the beliefs and ideologies espoused by some and those cherished by others. And why not? A university, after all, is a center of debate and discussion about every conceivable issue that may come up in the classroom, from racism, to immigration, to ethics, to civil rights, to religion, to secularism, to the validity of scientific theories, to war and peace, nationalism and internationalism, and everything in-between. In the midst of all this, it would be naïve to think that tensions could be avoided, or that conflicts were an aberration. By their very nature, universities thrive on the energy of ideas, theories and notions rubbing up against and challenging each other, and the fact that the university environment encourages students and faculty to pursue these different ideas and different pathways is something to be celebrated, to be grateful for. And it’s not just academic and ideological tussles that the university and its leadership get drawn into; add to the mix the town-and-gown conflicts that often come up along with other disputes and problems that may arise between the university community and its neighbors, and it’s clear that a president can’t simply sit comfortably at the top of the heap and hope that everything always goes well. It won’t. So one cannot bury one’s head in the sand nor can

one view isolationism as a secure option. One has to take positions. One must speak about his or her ideas and convictions, and stand up for one's principles—otherwise, what is the point of having any?

With that said, however, it must be noted that all of the utterances of a president—even those individuals who have turned themselves inside out to be popular and to “maintain tranquility”—will be scrutinized, and any inconsistencies exploited. It is important that the rhetoric used in addressing issues and problems be consistent with reality. All of a president's life is constantly placed under a microscope and examined to determine whether in both his or her professional and private life, the president is acting in concert with the values of the university and considers him/herself part of the community, subject to the same rules and regulations as everyone else.

A president's behavior can come in for particular scrutiny during those times when there are labor, faculty or student strikes affecting the campus. If presidents' salaries are too high, their amenities too plentiful, these matters will surely become an issue. And if a president himself or herself becomes a source of controversy, dealing with that will also consume a lot of time and energy and distract from the progress of the university. It will also likely cause many in the community—including the faculty—to feel that the president is not “sharing their burden,” particularly if his or her salary is raised and theirs is not. (That is not to say that university presidents don't deserve to be paid well; indeed, until recently, most only served an average of three-and-a-half years because of burnout. It is a lonely job, because it's difficult for a president to form friendships with faculty or administrators since that leaves him or her open to charges of favoritism. This has to be balanced against the fact that a university is a

not-for-profit enterprise in which teachers and educators predominate and are expected to both exemplify and represent the values and traditions of the university.) Traveling first class on airplanes instead of economy, driving an expensive car, staying in top hotels or dining in pricey restaurants, all these actions will be noted and measured against what others in the community do—especially in a small town where everyone knows what everyone else is doing. Leaders' “perks” might be considered irrelevant—at least to some extent—in the corporate world, but they can easily become a matter of heated public discussion and debate and used as weapons in the university context. One must always remember that perceptions that go unchallenged many become substitutes for reality.

Let me provide an illustration from experience. Right after arriving at Brown, I asked one of the union stewards, Bill Bell, the simple question, “How are your families?” He said, “Funny you should ask—our families have never been on campus except when they have walked the picket line with us.” I asked him what he would do about that if he were president of Brown, and he said he'd give a big annual party for the families of all the workers so that everyone felt included as part of the Brown community. I thought that was a brilliant idea, so I decided to do that. Every year at Brown, we held a campus-wide holiday party for two days, inviting the staff, faculty, their families, and students. Thousands of people came and there was skating, students singing, bands playing, games, food, refreshments—a grand celebration of Brown and all the members of its extended family.

During my tenure at Brown, we made it a point to emphasize the importance of the campus community and the significance of ceremonies and special occasions to the

various constituencies because they helped to strengthen ties between all the different segments of the university. Commencement ceremonies, honors awards, parents week, special concerts or readings to celebrate a particular event—even special days to honor secretaries and staff—were all important. When unfortunate occasions arose, I attended funerals and memorial services for retired professors and staff, or helped to plant trees in remembrance of students and faculty who had died, because these were ways of strengthening the university's bonds and honoring its past. To celebrate the present, Brown instituted practices such as flying the flags of all the nations from which our students came and inviting the ambassadors of their countries to be present at ceremonies or even speak at the university. And to welcome the future, we continued to open Brown's famous Van Wickle Gate each year for the opening convocation of freshmen and greet them as they marched through. We also inaugurated a dinner in honor of the freshmen and gave another dinner in honor of the senior class. By the time of the senior dinner, I had come to know many of the individual students who I had welcomed as freshmen very well.

Such efforts take a lot of time and a lot of work, but they are enormously rewarding and they are necessary if a university president is committed to being the kind of leader who stands for the values of the university and represents everybody on campus. They also do away, symbolically, with any kind of visible "upstairs/downstairs" hierarchy and highlight the unity of the entire university community.

It is always valuable to address the entire university community about challenges to the institution rather than speak separately to different constituencies. In that way, only one message is being delivered and that helps lead to confidence in the president's public state-

ments. The faculty and other constituencies then don't have to compare notes in order to divine presidential pronouncements or analyze discrepancies between practice and rhetoric.

One of the unique characteristics of the presidency of a university is that every gesture, every action, big or small on the president's part contributes to how well he or she is able to bring the community together and how the community will support the president, the institution—and each other—in times of difficulty. The test often comes when a genuine crisis arises because it is then that leadership can make all the difference in how an institution and those who are responsible for it are viewed not only during the crisis, but long after. In an essay on "Presidential Leadership in a Time of Crisis,"<sup>46</sup> Philip L. Dubois, then president of the University of Wyoming, who, in the first seven years of his tenure led his university through crises that he calls "notable by their number and scope"—including the murder of Matthew Shephard,<sup>47</sup>—makes the point that "there is no substitute in times of community trauma for one comforting voice. And although every rule probably holds its own exception, that voice at a university must be the president's." In that same vein, it is also useful to remember that, for a university president, "while good deeds often go unnoticed, crises never do. This is because your stakeholders...are measuring your conduct during the crisis. They know that a crisis does not *make* change—it *reveals* character."<sup>48</sup>

46 *University Presidents as Moral Leaders*, edited by David G. Brown (American Council on Education/Praeger series on higher education, 2005).

47 Shephard was a gay student at the University of Wyoming. In 1998 he was severely beaten and subsequently died, an incident that drew both national and international attention.

48 Murphy, Sean K. "Crisis Management Demystified: Here's How to Prevent a Crisis from Ruining Your Institution's Reputation." *University Business*, February 2003.

Immediate crises notwithstanding, confrontations with the possibility of failure and looming sources of conflict and tension are hardly phenomena that will be forever frozen in time. Just as the future can be seen as a moving target, so, too, are the difficulties that can seem most pressing on any given day, because problems change and evolve, just like everything else that affects the life of an institution. This is particularly true at a university, where elements of the community, such as faculty and alumni, tend to remain stable, but where at least one major constituency changes every single year (sometimes, every semester)—I mean, of course, the great waves of students who come and go, over time. Every year, a class graduates and a whole new class arrives, its members bringing with them new ambitions, new goals, new ideas about how to live their own lives and interact with the world around them, plus new groups of parents and often new social and cultural issues—both national and international in scope. These students, in essence, are the new citizens of the university community—or at least, citizens in the making who are seeing their society and themselves in completely new ways. They are both observers and participants, working out in their minds and in their lives how they will approach their futures. They often have idealized what the university experience will be, not realizing that, like life itself, the university environment and even the educational experience is always in flux. The gap that may arise between the expectation and the reality of the university experience (and by extension, that of society at large)—supportive of cultural experiments, socially responsible, laboratories of change and idealism—can itself sow seeds of conflict and tension. Existing inconsistencies are often perceived as institutional hypocrisy, so students have to be engaged on that front and their concerns dealt with directly and honestly.

Hence, every year the university community is again faced with the challenge of educating, acculturating and absorbing into the larger community a whole new population of individuals who are variously anxious, excited, tentative, competitive, confused, shy, outgoing, brilliant, moody, average-, over- and under-achievers—and sometimes, a little bit of all those things and more. For me, seeing this ebb and flow every year always made me think of what Margaret Mead called “the whole gamut of human potentialities” that connects us all and of the duty of each generation to the ones that follow after and those that have gone before. This is a profoundly important concept for both the faculty and administration of an educational institution, since part of their responsibility is to help students not only craft a vision and a plan for the path that their own lives will follow, but also to make them understand that they have an indispensable role to play in the future of our nation and our society. In essence, educating an individual centers around imparting knowledge, but in a larger sense, it is also about preparing that individual to be a good ancestor—someone who, by being educated, will be able to both honor the past and improve the future. For Brown, that meant that our students would use the education they worked so hard to acquire not only for their own benefit but also to contribute to strengthening the institutions of our democracy and to embody, throughout their lives and careers, the values of a free society. These include the freedom to follow one’s conscience, freedom of thought, respect for the rights and responsibilities of individuals as well as the rights of the minority *and* the majority—even the freedom, simply, to follow one’s dreams.

The president’s role, however, is not confined to the university alone. The responsibilities of the office extend beyond the campus. As

Albert Yates, president emeritus of Colorado State University has written, “The challenges facing college and university presidents are not materially different from those in charge of any other large organization, but the responsibility for leading with virtue is greater because of the role that our institutions play in society...higher education remains our society’s conscience—institutions that are empowered to question and challenge, that are expected to instill values and character, and that are perceived as standing for more than the pursuit of a healthy bottom line.”<sup>49</sup> I absolutely agree.

### **Mobilizing Resources: Alumni and Trustees**

Whether they admit it or not, universities are in a perpetual fundraising mode. As dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and as provost of the University of Pennsylvania and later, as president of The New York Public Library, I had been involved with two major and very successful fundraising campaigns. Penn’s campaign, launched in the fall of 1975, was called the Campaign for the Eighties and was designed to raise \$255 million to maintain its fiscal stability, improve its physical infrastructure, and to implement some of its ambitious academic goals—this in a time when both the nation’s economy and the university’s finances were suffering. We met our target. For the Library, a public/private partnership not only raised over \$327 million, as noted earlier, but also helped the institution to reclaim its preeminent position as a national treasure. The experience of these campaigns gave me the ingredients—and the inspiration—to be daring on behalf of Brown and its future when I became the university’s president.

Like the Library and the University of Pennsylvania, I knew that Brown did not have

to justify its existence, but it did need to articulate its mission and central role in the higher education firmament, it did need to get the attention of those who took it for granted and didn’t understand or appreciate the integral role that Brown plays not only in the civic, cultural and educational life of Providence and Rhode Island, but the nation, as well. It was important to me, first at the Library and then at Brown, that these institutions not be seen as some sort of cultural relics or historical dinosaurs but as dynamic, evolving institutions determined to cope not only with the requirements of the present but the challenges of the future, too. For that to happen, we needed to implement bold, even audacious efforts that were nonetheless consistent with Brown’s mission, history and unique character. We also needed the participation and support of the entire campus community. It was equally important to acknowledge the progress that had been achieved in the past by giving credit where it was due, keeping the engagement of those who had been loyal supporters of Brown while mobilizing those who, before, had not been invited into or felt truly a part of the Brown community.

All this, in fact, is what happened: in 1992, the university embarked on the most ambitious capital campaign in Brown’s history, a five-year project called the *Campaign for the Rising Generation*. At first, the university’s Trustees approached the campaign with trepidation thinking that our aspirations were unrealistic, but that soon turned into fierce determination to achieve the high goals we had agreed upon.

The majority of our faculty participated in the campaign, as did parents, students, staff, alumni and friends of Brown, all of whom responded with astonishing generosity, demonstrating just how committed the entire Brown extended family was to the university. The validity of our “daring” plan was confirmed at

<sup>49</sup> David G. Brown, op cit.

the campaign's midpoint when Brown alumni and alumnae, parents and friends, responding to a survey from the development office, expressed their support for the campaign's goals and endorsed their importance. This commitment was highlighted by such acts as the Class of 1945 giving \$1 million to the campaign to mark their fiftieth reunion, the largest fiftieth reunion gift in Brown's history. The ultimate goal of the campaign was to raise \$450 million; by the time the effort was concluded in 1996, we had raised \$534 million from 55,000 individuals, foundations and corporations.

For many universities, campaigns are not only about money—they are a metaphor for telling or retelling the history of the institution. Such was the case with Brown, which relied not on a financial legacy but on the depth and breadth of talent, hard work, determination, innovation and academic excellence. It allowed us to connect—or reconnect—the people of Rhode Island and indeed, people across the nation, with the importance and contributions of Brown to the United States. It also helped us to reach out to the alumni, not just of Brown but also of Pembroke College, the women's college founded at Brown in 1891, which had merged with the university in 1971. It was a way to educate parents and students about the institution they had chosen over other universities by providing the historical context of Brown's academic development as well as highlighting the direction of its future. In addition, the campaign served to remind foundations and corporations about the university as a source of invention, research, innovation, education, experimentation, imagination, creativity and of course, scholarship. Campaigns are also a means to commit, or recommit an institution's governing Board to their stewardship of the institution and to recruit new Board members—both alumni

and non-alumni—who will give not only their time and expertise but also financial support. These goals were also accomplished.

Mobilizing the alumni is certainly important in terms of fundraising, but it is absolutely essential in rallying support for any significant university initiative or reform. After all, it is these individuals who invested a good part of their youth in the university and staked their future on the education it provided them. They hope to take pride in their alma mater and to see real evidence that it has a regional, national and even international impact. They expect their university to continue to do justice to its traditions, adhere to standards of excellence and uphold its values—and they are not afraid to let the administration know if they feel let down in any of these areas...

In their capacity as members of governing boards, Trustees are a major influence on our universities. The critical role they can play in enriching the quality of an institution's work at all levels was brought home to me when I was dean, and later provost, at the University of Pennsylvania. At that time, I came to know Henry Salvatori, a very interesting, well-read, cultured, conservative businessman who had helped to launch Ronald Reagan's political career. Salvatori, who graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, Class of 1937, had a critical mind. Whenever I went to Los Angeles, where he lived, I made it a point to see him. I remember that he always castigated the shortcomings of Communists, socialists, liberals, libertarians, Democrats, and even some conservatives and Republicans. One day, I asked him what he thought was the greatest weakness of capitalism and he replied that the corporate world often gathers together tremendous talent for the purpose of legitimizing their actions rather than for providing expertise and enlightenment. His words made a tremendous impres-

sion on me, and from then on, whether at The New York Public Library, at Brown University or at Carnegie Corporation of New York, I have made a conscious effort to engage the talents of Trustees and, when possible, tap their expertise on behalf of the institutions I have headed rather than expecting them to merely legitimize institutional decision making—and in doing so, the Library, the university and the foundation have been the beneficiaries.

In that connection, I was fortunate at the Library and at Brown University—and now, at Carnegie Corporation—to have worked with extraordinary Trustees who have focused on contributing to the formulation of institutional priorities without imposing their own personal biases or giving in to the temptation to micromanage. After all, managers can always be hired. The role of Trustees is to provide long-term policy guidelines for an institution and ensure accountability for how the institution's leadership implements those policies. This is particularly true for Trustees of institutions such as libraries, universities and foundations, which are obviously fundamentally different than for-profit business enterprises. They are extremely complex enterprises with a historical identity, a particular culture and many different constituencies with many different expectations of them and for them. They require the time and attention of very special individuals with deep insight into the indispensability of these institutions to America's national life.

It would be fascinating, I think, for someone to do a study of the people who serve on the Boards of the 4,000 public and private colleges and universities in the United States. Who are the individuals who accept the role and responsibility of being a Trustee? What motivates them to serve in the tradition of voluntarism that is one of our nation's great contributions to the world? What has been

the legacy of these men and women? There are any number of different motivations for becoming a trustee of such institutions: among them are those who are carrying on a family tradition (in some cases, more than one or two generations may succeed each other on a board); those self-made men and women who take pride in the fact that they can return to their university as a Trustee; those who join out of a wish to serve or to learn, or to enter into a community of ideas. In particular, I have always found the commitment of those college and university Trustees who are serving their alma mater to be a moving and even inspirational combination of duty, pride, and a commitment to public service.

Many parents of foreign students and the students themselves, who receive no financial aid and pay full tuition to attend American universities, find it difficult to understand this kind of dedication, and especially the fact that Trustees often make substantial donations to their university—as, of course, do many alumni. This combination of service and philanthropy is unheard of in many societies outside the United States. In fact, America's public and private institutions are extremely fortunate that the tradition of service in our nation is so deeply ingrained in its citizens, including so many prominent individuals who feel a moral obligation to use whatever social, political or business-related platform they have earned through their own success—as well as, often, their private wealth—for the benefit of future generations.

In the process of serving, some Trustees get extremely attached to their organization or institution, not only intellectually but also viscerally. For universities, one of the challenges in these situations is to ensure that Trustees' interests—even devotion—are not "captured" by certain special interests at the university for the

benefit of a particular school, a particular department, or a particular professor's (or group of professors') specific research interests. Board members have an obligation to see themselves, and conduct themselves, as Trustees of the entire university and must be sure that, even inadvertently, their loyalties, their personal philosophies and their preferences are never mobilized against fellow Trustees, or against the university administration or the president. Such situations can lead to paralyzing factionalization that is always harmful to the university, and will be particularly damaging during times of crisis. A university is not an extension of the Trustees; their job is not to cast their shadows over the institution but to ensure that the legacy of past generations as well as the accomplishments of the present continue to provide for continually deeper and richer educational opportunities for tomorrow's students. John Gardner, Carnegie Corporation's former president (1955 to 1967), once said that universities have always had both their lovers and their critics, but the critics have seldom been loving, and the lovers have seldom been critical. "On the one side," he warned, "those who loved their institutions tended to smother them in an embrace of death, loving their rigidities more than their promise, shielding them from life-giving criticism. On the other side, there arose a breed of critics without love, skilled in demolition but untutored in the arts by which human institutions are nurtured and strengthened and made to flourish. Between the two, the institutions perished."<sup>50</sup> I would add that yet another danger is being meddling. Well-meaning individuals who can't stop themselves from inappropriately or repeatedly commenting on or trying to intervene in institutional affairs can wreak havoc. I've seen it happen.

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<sup>50</sup> "Uncritical Lovers, Unloving Critics." Commencement address by John Gardner at Cornell University on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1968, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cornell.

A common denominator for Trustees of all nonprofits, especially colleges and universities, is their role as symbols of institutional integrity, accountability, fiduciary responsibility, and oversight of the course and direction of the institution. One of the most important roles a Trustee will ever carry out is helping to select a leader who is worthy of the institution that the Trustees have dedicated themselves to and empowering that individual to help fulfill all the institutional potential that the Board, as well as previous Trustees and presidents, have set out to achieve. Having served on more than forty different nonprofit and institutional Boards during the course of my career, I was able to acquire first-hand knowledge of the culture of Boards of Trustees, their different styles and different *modus operandi*. Based on this experience, it seems clear to me that in the case of universities, where there are always endemic tensions coupled with the awesome responsibility to oversee not only the quality of education provided by the institution but also the physical well-being of thousands of students, there are always going to be problems—some of them very serious—that will thrust the institution into a spotlight for which it may not have been prepared. The political utterances of faculty members; exhibitions of "offensive" art; the "unruly" behavior of young men and women; student newspapers publishing "tasteless" articles; the performance—or "nonperformance"—of athletic teams; and dozens of other issues and actions on the part of any individual or segment of the "city-state" I previously alluded to can prompt anything from a minor uproar to a full-fledged crisis that can be devastating for all involved. When this happens, not only the president but the Trustees will find themselves in the eye of the hurricane. How well the storm is weathered will depend in large part on the insight, sensitivity, experience and cohesiveness of the Board and its members' relationship with the

president. If the Trustees have chosen the right individual for the job of leading the institution, then chances are that after the crisis has been dealt with, the university, its leadership and its students will be stronger and perhaps even more appreciative of each other than they were before.

### Delicate Balances

Throughout my years in academia, I came to appreciate not only that a university is extraordinarily complex but that, in many instances, it also has two separate cultures that coexist—sometimes uneasily. One is the academic culture, with its roots in medieval Europe and the Mediterranean. This culture is very proud of the fact that even though it tolerates the notion that a university must have a vertical organization, it still thinks of itself, in essence, as having a horizontal structure, where all the faculty members, regardless of “rank or privilege” are equal, because all are members of the commonwealth of learning. (In practice of course, the faculty is highly stratified, with its own peculiar hierarchy. The university professor, the tenured or untenured professor, the holder of an endowed chair, the lecturer, adjunct professor—each knows who is “above” and who is “below.”) To these individuals, the president of the university is not really the boss: he or she is there to lead and serve them, and at the same time to be the shield that will protect them and their privileges from the encroachment or threat of outside forces. The president is also expected to create and maintain the atmosphere and conditions conducive to the free exchange of ideas and the unfettered pursuit of knowledge, as well as protect academic freedom. In addition, the president must oversee a second culture—an actual corporate culture—that is preoccupied not with academic issues but with all the financial, legal and fiduciary issues that governance entails and hence, is essential for the functioning of the university.

While many Trustees appreciate the complexity of universities and their academic culture, nevertheless, their language, their terms of reference and other touchstones are, by necessity and experience, corporate and managerial in nature. This is entirely natural, as Board members deal with the institution’s investments and other financial matters, with infrastructure, contracts, management issues, legal obligations, etc., while also interacting with the development office, through which Trustees not only help the university raise funds, but also deal with alumni and governmental relations.

One of a university president’s greatest challenges is how to manage the delicate balance between these two cultures—indeed, how to bridge the gap between them. Maintaining equilibrium can be particularly difficult if the president has joined corporate boards, which pay very well.<sup>51</sup> The chairs of those boards sometimes also serve on the university’s board. This is often justified as “building bridges” between the university and the business world, and as necessary for the university’s welfare. The fact that a university president serves on a corporate board may also be pointed to as an indicator of how much the corporate world respects the university president’s abilities as a leader. Still, such arrangements may be fraught with problems. The university community, for example, may see conflict-of-interest questions arising if the university is doing business with the corporation of which the university president is a trustee. In such instances, merely abstaining from votes or not participating in business that involves the corporation and the university may not be enough to eliminate the *appearance* of conflict-of-interest issues. In addition, when a corporation faces a major legal or ethical problem, the university president who is

<sup>51</sup> University presidents joining corporate boards is a relatively new phenomenon; the practice became more common beginning in the 1970s and 1980s.

a member of their board may get dragged into the situation even if he or she has nothing to do with it—and, by extension, that may also reflect poorly on the university itself. Furthermore, for a president to belong to many corporate boards may result in yet another dilemma: how not to be perceived as tilting towards the corporate culture in terms of maintaining the delicate balance between the worlds of business and academia that, as we have seen, is one of the university president's responsibilities. If a president has to belong to corporate boards for the purposes of income or reputation or influence, it is advisable for him or her to give equal time to service on nonprofit boards in order to balance both worlds. Of course, serving on *any* board should not prevent a president who is paid a full-time salary from devoting all the time, energy and attention necessary to the university that expects and deserves the president's best efforts. And he or she needs to be aware that a president who "moonlights" cannot apply strict rules to faculty not to do the same and hence, create a situation where both the president and faculty members are so engaged elsewhere that they are not serving the university to the best of their ability

The tension between the academic and corporate cultures creates all kinds of dilemmas. I've witnessed situations, for instance, where the president of a university tried to please both constituencies by telling each what it expected to hear. In this instance, the president of a university may commiserate with the governing board—most of whom are from a corporate culture—by decrying the difficulties he or she has in dealing with tenured professors (which nowadays some refer to as "tenured radicals") who have never met a payroll, don't know anything about the need to keep an eye on the bottom line, make impossible demands, have unrealistic expectations even though some

of them are not even "good teachers" or have not fulfilled their potential as scholars. This same president, in dealing with the faculty, may complain "in confidence" about how Trustees are meddling; have no appreciation of the intrinsic values of a rarified educational institution like a university; do not understand or cherish the principle of academic freedom; and he may imply that some of the Trustees are well-meaning philistines who are only on the Board by virtue of their money and their success in the business world.

This kind of doublespeak is dangerous, and as a strategy, it's destined to fail because instead of closing the divide between the two groups, it ends up making it even wider and in the process, undermines the president's authority with both camps. What often happens when a problem or crisis arises is that the two formerly opposing sides close ranks, leaving the president out in the cold. The two sides may even work together to facilitate the president's exit. This was not an uncommon scenario during the era of protests over the Vietnam war and civil rights, when there were many instances—*too* many—of university presidents who promised to follow contradictory policies. We have certainly seen instances of the same thing happening in recent memory.

Still, it's very difficult for the president not to be pulled in at least two different directions at once. For instance, while university Trustees will certainly support the president's commitment to excellence and his or her dedication to maintaining high standards, especially in the case of the best universities, at the same time it is natural for them to want the university to be well run and well managed, be fiscally sound, and have a strategic plan in place with benchmarks for judging progress. They also want their institution to more than measure up to sister institutions in every category, both academic

and administrative. Trustees are also concerned with cost-effectiveness, as of course they must be—as should the president be—since the long-term well-being of the institution is very much in their hands. But in this regard, problems often arise in times of economic downturn when hard questions have to be asked such as, where should economies be made?

In terms of “making economies,” one phrase that resonated throughout my experiences at the University of Pennsylvania, The New York Public Library and at Brown University was “deferred maintenance.” I learned that you can always have a balanced budget through deferred maintenance, but deferred maintenance, unless you have specifically planned for it, quickly becomes planned neglect. When I arrived at Brown, there was a huge backlog of such “deferred” projects, including buildings and facilities that were in desperate need of renovation. Sometimes, I used humor to deal with situations in which this kind of neglect was a factor. For example, the dormitories at Brown had been built shortly after World War II and many of these had not been kept up since—but I joked that we charged a lot for students to live in the dormitories because they were carrying out a historical reenactment! Eventually, of course, we did address their restoration, issuing \$33.5 million in bonds, when interest rates were very favorable.

Sometimes, when rehabilitation was not sufficient, and a new building was needed, the university naturally sought a donor or donors to secure the necessary funds. Such instances taught me an important lesson: that accepting money for construction of a building without securing the funding to maintain it is a way of contributing to “deferred maintenance.”

The lure of a major gift for any purpose is enticing; it's viewed as a coup when it's an-

nounced—a plus for the university with no downside—which often leads many involved to forget that accepting money means making a real commitment to do what the money was intended for, such as build a facility or endow a professorship. So, in the long run, the gift could actually end up adding to the overall deficit. When a professorship is endowed, for example, and an individual is hired, the faculty probably sees only salary; the department chair sees salary plus office space and secretarial help; but someone in the university administration has to take all that into account along with benefits, health care, pension, new computer equipment, a parking space, etc.—in other words, all the costs involved need to be totaled and that, over time, may amount to significantly more than the original gift.

At Brown, during my tenure, the university's priorities were the faculty, the library and financial aid for students, but it was impossible to fully meet the funding requirements they all generated. If one was hoping to realize all of the above priorities equally, there were only three choices: invade the endowment, rely on annual giving as if it was an always-reliable and steady source of income, or borrow from federal authorities to pay for capital improvements. I did none of these things because I felt that to do so would entail mortgaging the future of the university.

Other potentially dangerous plans involve quietly increasing the size of the student body and enlarging class size in order to bring in additional revenue; spending a higher percentage of the endowment return than has been the usual practice; cutting staff and faculty travel; even delaying filling needed faculty positions.

In recent years, the pressure on the budgets of institutions of higher education has only grown more severe because of a new factor:

technology. I have touched on many of the challenges technology presents to the modern university, but perhaps one that looms largest is the price tag for these advances. When you analyze the costs involved in acquiring and maintaining all the technology required by the present-day university, including hardware, software, new staff, maintenance costs, bandwidth, even new facilities, the enormity of the ongoing investments that will have to be made becomes apparent. It is not just the sciences or other technology-related disciplines that require more and more resources. *Our Cultural Commonwealth*, a recent report from the American Council of Learned Societies, notes that the humanities and social sciences will also have to make larger investments in the systems, personnel and practices that support the digital infrastructure that is now essential to academia. In times of austerity—which most higher education institutions must face once in a while—the balance between the pressures to keep the university academically excellent and on the cutting edge of technology, while also maintaining its infrastructure in top condition, may be hard to achieve. What Trustees want to see happen in terms of dealing with rising costs are either economies that can be imposed over the long-run and result in continued savings or new revenue-enhancing measures that are equally forward looking. But if these measures—as well as short-term solutions that may be imposed in an emergency such as hiring part-time or adjunct faculty with lower pay, no benefits and often, no office space—are seen by the faculty and students as interfering with the culture and mission of the university, or with its educational (or even social and cultural) offerings, the two groups may find themselves on a collision course.

Let me illustrate this point with a specific example. Two of the universities I've served, Brown and the University of Pennsylvania,

have excellent Egyptology departments. Both are well endowed, but since there aren't a huge number of individuals who want to train to become Egyptologists, these departments, in comparison to others, don't enroll all that many students. So, how do you justify the continuation of such expensive programs on a cost-benefit basis? For Trustees steeped in free-market economics, where there is a clear-cut relationship between demand and profit, there may be real questions about the sustainability of excellence that cannot at least pay for itself. But for academics, there is an equal sense of incomprehensibility at the idea of trying to measure their accomplishments or their educative success on the basis of Wall Street-type "quarterly" results.

Egyptology may not be central to a university's core undergraduate curriculum, but it is essential—in the case of both Brown and Penn, for instance—to maintain the universities' century-long tradition of excellent scholarship and research in an area critical to our understanding of the development of civilization. When, as at any university, there is virtually day-to-day competition for funding and resources, where do you strike the balance between support of long-standing and proven excellence, with new needs and new opportunities? It is a continually vexing question.

Some institutions rely on the "each tub on its own bottom" idea, where each school establishes its own priorities and has to find ways of paying for them. Some areas of study, of course, attract more students—and thus more funding in terms of tuition, alumni giving, etc.—than others, so even at "rich" universities, schools such as those of divinity, social work, education, and architecture will almost always be working from a much smaller financial base than their counterparts (such as business, law, and medicine, for example). In such an environment, student enrollment

and demand may well determine the educational offerings of the university. But if you're relying on that kind of measure, do you make a purely mechanistic calculation and abandon something like Egyptology, no matter how important or valuable the department? Or do you set yourself and your institution the task of finding a way to continue to honor the seeds of excellence that were sown in the past and preserve knowledge and scholarship for posterity? This is where presidential leadership is critical and where the values of the president, as well as his or her eloquence, intellectual acuity and ability to make the "cost-plus" argument on behalf of knowledge and wisdom, are called upon and must win the day.

University presidents have an obligation to explain to Trustees, policymakers and the public that not everything at the institution—neither courses nor fieldwork nor research nor any other of a hundred ways that knowledge is continually pursued and preserved by human beings—can be measured in terms of cost-benefit. Presidents often have to play the role of advocate for history, tradition and scholarship that cannot be quantified in purely dollars-and-cents terms. Can you put a price on providing the world with a translation of the Gnostic bible or a decoded version of the Sumerian dictionary or revelations deciphered from Manichean literature or courses in medieval music, Icelandic sagas, ancient Arabic poetry and so forth? Not everything of value to civilization exists in or was created to serve only some conception of present-day reality. By that measure, objects in a museum that are not frequently viewed or books not continually checked out of a library could be discarded as being of little or diminished value.

There can be a very delicate balance between what must be preserved for what one might term the greater good of civilization and

the very real needs and obligations of a university to maintain its financial health and competitiveness by offering programs and courses that students will pay for and that donors will support. Another element in the mix is the often divisive and frustrating debate that can go on among professional schools, the arts and sciences, business schools, etc., where one argues that, well, our teacher-to-student ratio is seventy-five to one, while Egyptology, for example, is two-to-one, so which one is clearly cost-effective? The answer, for me, is that the question is not relevant: each part of a university fulfills its own role and has its own purpose, but taken together, they have an overall purpose that is more than a collection of courses—a university is the very definition of the saying that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

Meeting all these kinds of challenges are tasks that fall squarely into the lap of the university president, because it is the president who is ultimately charged with rallying all of his or her constituencies to go forward into their collective future, not by finessing them in some way or trying to buy time by such expedients as setting up committees "to study the matter" and so forth, but by *leading* them, by standing up for the institution's core values and convincing even warring factions that neither winning a feud nor hiding tensions behind a façade of tranquility should be anyone's ultimate objective: the well-being of the entire university community and the excellence of the education provided to students must always be paramount.

This is especially true of a lame-duck president who may have announced his or her retirement or resignation. In that situation, the president should not put difficult or critical issues on the back burner for a successor to sort out. Indeed, it is incumbent on an outgoing president to try to resolve as many vexing problems as possible so that the first job of the new

president is not to deal with the failures and unmet challenges of previous administrations. That won't do the university any good, nor will it help the president's reputation.

## The Business of Education

Universities do not exist in a realm apart or protected from the rest of society; they are an integral part of its social, intellectual, economic, and cultural fabric. In fact, one can make the case that they are even more than that: the philosopher and intellectual historian Arthur O. Lovejoy's assessment of how universities serve humankind certainly qualifies them as part of what he called the "Great Chain of Being"—an essential element of the linked hierarchy of ideas and principles that stretch from the lowest manifestations of life to an as-yet unrealized perfection.<sup>52</sup> As Lovejoy wrote, "The university is not only a vehicle for transmitting to successive generations knowledge already gained; it is...the outpost of the intellectual life of a civilized society, the institution set up on the frontier of human knowledge to widen the dominion of man's mind."<sup>53</sup>

In other words, the past really *is* prologue. Every day on the university campus, students and teachers are reaching back into the past for knowledge and wisdom, mixing them with the ideas of today and looking forward to what may come in the future. Given this context, it is not hard to see why, although universities have almost every feature, concern and responsibility of a business (including physical plants, organized labor unions, bookstores, shops, dispensaries, hospitals, a security force, maintenance staff, investments, purchasing departments, technology requirements and often even their own bus or other transportation

system to carry students safely around campus or between the university and its environs), institutions of higher education continue to see themselves not primarily as for-profit enterprises but as sanctuaries of education, focused on providing the next generation with as much knowledge, experience and wisdom as possible. Many universities, however, are in denial about the business-oriented nature of much of what they do. They take great pride in their dedication to their educative mission and their nonprofit status, and go to great lengths to make clear that they are nonprofit institutions dedicated to altruistic goals.

Perhaps that's why when scandals erupt at universities, they are often viewed as more shocking than in other sectors of our national life. We somehow expect scholars, educators and university leaders to remain above the fray, even though the same tensions, scandals and corruption inherent in everyday society certainly exist on campus, as well. But as centers of learning and education, endeavors generally perceived as introspective in nature and objective by definition, people expect universities to be better than that—in part, because their focus is supposed to be not only on the past and the present, but also on the future. So, when it comes to issues concerning students—and interestingly, labor unions as well—institutions of higher education are expected to act as if they belong only to the culture of academia, where, in theory, high-minded, ideal solutions will always prevail over cold financial realities and where justice, meted out by student/faculty "courts" is supposed to be more humane, more balanced and fair, than the courts of the "real" world. It is as if universities are charged with coming up with model answers for all the ills that beset society: racism, sexism, religious prejudice, inequality, the income gap and just about anything else you can name. What the

52 *The Great Chain of Being: The Study of the History of an Idea*, by Arthur O. Lovejoy (Harvard University Press, 2005; Harper Torchbooks, 1960).

53 *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 1930.

entire K-12 education system could not accomplish, the democratic city-state that is the university is expected to handle with infinite sagacity. In effect, universities are expected to be utopias of a sort, built upon the loftiest values, inculcated with the most irreproachable ideals and possessed of a vision that allows them to see everyone as equal along with the ability to provide parity to everyone, including all those who have in any way been disenfranchised by economic circumstances, physical disability, sexual, racial or religious intolerance, or any other social, cultural or political infraction.

This is a terrible burden. Every social and cultural ill that can beset a human being and that has not been erased or at least modified through twelve years of elementary and middle school education, through the loving offices of family life or the intervention of a whole host of public and private institutions dedicated to improving the welfare of American citizens, somehow becomes the responsibility of the university to deal with in order to produce the next generation of America's professionals and achievers. Since universities cannot meet these extraordinary expectations, everyone involved experiences a sense of letdown—even betrayal. University leaders, therefore, must moderate their rhetoric and not over-promise what they can deliver as part of the process of educating adults. While education is an invaluable foundation for intellectual and even emotional and psychological development, it cannot solve every problem that everyone who walks through a university's gates may have, nor was it designed to.

Education and enlightenment are, of course, not the only considerations that the university community is concerned about. Avoiding the fact that business is part of the academic environment as well as university operations and functions is not productive. What is required is an understanding of the ramifications

of this mix of modalities, because these days, universities are actively seeking business partners to make up for cuts in public funds and to meet the ever-increasing costs of both pure and applied research and even graduate education, where universities may subsidize the arts and sciences in order to remain competitive.

This is especially true nowadays, when the line between “public” and “private” universities is increasingly blurred. In “the good old times,” public universities in the U.S. relied almost entirely on public funds while private universities were supported by tuition fees, alumni giving and research funding. This division, however, is no longer clear cut. Johns Hopkins University, for example, receives more federal funding for its research activities than any other American university,<sup>54</sup> but it is only one of many, many private institutions competing for state and federal support, while public universities increasingly are turning to private foundations, individuals, and corporations for funding infusions. On the other side of the equation, the University of Virginia, a public institution founded by Thomas Jefferson in 1819, today receives less than 10 percent of its funding from the state of Virginia. An example of a public university that does continue to receive a substantial amount of its support from the state—22 percent—is the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which was also recently included in a list of the top 50 global universities compiled by *Newsweek*, a remarkable achievement.<sup>55</sup> Notably, in an era of mass higher education, this mixture of support will only continue to be seen on an international scale: since no nation-state can afford to finance the entire cost of its citizens' higher education, government, private-sector

54 Anne K. Walters, “Industry Support for Academic Research Falls, but Federal Aid Rises,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 12, 2006.

55 *Newsweek*, International Edition, August 21, 2006/ August 28, 2006.

research support, alumni giving, and students themselves, through tuition, will continue to be among the sources of funding that will increasingly have to be tapped.

As universities and corporations continue to forge ever-closer partnerships, particularly in the area of research, these arrangements raise the specter of university research being pulled out of its orbit of free inquiry, its transparency muddied by exclusive contracts entered into with industry and business. In addition to presenting potential challenges to academic freedom, other critical questions arise from these associations such as, to what extent do public universities engaging in corporation-supported research actually serve the public good by helping to create drugs or contributing to inventions that belong, first, to the companies that paid for their development? In Britain, for example, the push toward “technology transfer” has kicked into high gear, with both government and corporate pressure being brought to bear on universities to find more ways of turning research into saleable products. Arguing against that trend are those such as Nobel laureate Arthur Kornberg, who has noted that multi-million-dollar support from NIH enabled him to carry out research on DNA for 30 years, “without any promise or expectation that this research would lead to marketable products or procedures.” Public funding led to the development of the first computers; the Internet is an outgrowth of network communications created by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the most academic arm of the Pentagon. It is unlikely that the long-term, basic research that led to these world-changing inventions would be a priority for the outcome-oriented budgets of companies in the U.S. or abroad. So another question that must be raised is, to what extent is basic research unnecessarily speeded up or bent to the needs of the compa-

nies that invest in university research programs? It should be noted that in this regard, corporations are not the only interested or influential parties: in recent years, there has been increasing pressure from the public as well as from local, state and federal government agencies for research to produce quick, measurable and impactful results, particularly in the area of medicine and health care. And are university-based research agendas being compromised by pressure from external commercial forces? When businesses hold the purse strings and dictate the timetable by which research is to be conducted, outcomes may be influenced as well as ownership of research products. In some cases, the governance of a university may also be affected if quality standards are set by corporations instead of by the university itself. These issues may be particularly difficult to address for some states still resisting the need to respect academic freedom and transparency in government and business dealings. Sooner or later, however, they will have to be confronted by even the most closed societies.

In terms of the United States, the increasing loss of public funding for higher education prompted Mark Yudof, president of the University of Minnesota, to write an article with the bleak title, “Is the Public Research University in America Dead?”<sup>56</sup> Between 1986 and 1996, he notes, state spending on higher education fell 14 percent, with universities losing budget share to other priorities, including prisons and health care. And while the rate of growth in federal support for university research continues to soften, over the last three decades, funds provided to U.S. universities by the industrial sector grew faster than funding from any other source. Industry spent \$2 billion on scientific research and development

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<sup>56</sup> Mark G. Yudof, “Is the Public Research University in America Dead?” July 2001 (unpublished article).

at U.S. universities and colleges in 1999, according to the National Science Foundation;<sup>57</sup> in 2001 (the latest year for which such figures are available), industry provided 6.8 percent of funding for academic research, a slight decline from a high of 7.4 percent in 1999.<sup>58</sup>

As the nation's pioneer in basic research, the university faces a difficult challenge. How can it maintain leadership in pure research if distracted by research for the marketplace? In the past, the university's challenge was maintaining independence from federal regulators; the current challenge to academic freedom in research is to keep some degree of well-defined independence from industry and business. For as James Bryant Conant, one of Harvard's illustrious presidents, once wrote, "There is only one proved method of assisting the advancement of pure science—that of picking men of genius, backing them heavily and leaving them to direct themselves."<sup>59</sup>

Clearly, the increasing commercialization of university research has the potential to be a corrupting influence if economic necessities force faculty to surrender some of their prerogatives. When industry sponsors university research, it may affect the faculty's research agenda in ways that directly and indirectly discourage pure research in favor of research with commercial applications. The challenge is to balance theoretical and practical research—and to protect the individual rights of the faculty, the collective rights of the university and the integrity of research.

Of course, there are two sides to the argument about commercializing research that comes out of universities. In 2006, the Milken

57 "Science in Class," by Daniel Zoll, *The San Francisco Bay Guardian*, March 21, 2001.

58 "Bioscience Warfare," by Alison Pierce, *SF Weekly*, June 2, 2004.

59 James Bryant Conant, "National Research Argued," Letter to the Editor, *The New York Times*, August 13, 1945.

Institute reported that leading universities that spend money on helping academics turn their research into commercial ventures see a sixfold return on their investment,<sup>60</sup> which is certainly an impressive incentive. On the other hand, says Ross De Vol, lead author of the report,<sup>61</sup> commercialization should not be seen as a solution for general funding shortfalls in higher education but as a means to recoup some of the costs of research.<sup>62</sup>

One of the most controversial examples of a university-corporation relationship is the five-year alliance that was created between Novartis, the life-sciences company based in Switzerland, and the University of California at Berkeley's Department of Plant and Microbial Biology. Since 1999, the company had been paying the department \$5 million a year for the right to license a portion of what the researchers discover. Some said it would strengthen the department; others worried that research with less commercial potential would inevitably be phased out. When the arrangement ended, it was not renewed, and in 2004, reviewers at the University of Michigan Institute for Food and Agricultural Standards issued a report critical of the \$25 million research deal, saying that while no commercial discoveries came from the agreement and the Berkeley researchers say they weren't unduly influenced by Novartis, the Michigan reviewers asserted that the questions of perception raised by the arrangement had cast the University of California at Berkeley in a bad light and caused undue controversy and ill will.<sup>63</sup>

60 "Top Universities See Sixfold Return on Technology Transfer," *Financial Times*, September 20, 2006.

61 *Mind to Market: A Global Analysis of University Biotechnology Transfer and Commercialization* (Milken Institute, 2006).

62 "Top Universities," op cit.

63 *External Review of the Collaborative Research Agreement between Novartis Agricultural Discovery Institute, Inc. and the Regents of the University of California*, Institute for Food and Agricultural Standards, Michigan State University, July 13, 2004.

The University of California at Berkeley is hardly the only university that has tried to parlay its reputation and its expertise into hard dollars. MIT's Industrial Liaison Program, for example, charges corporations membership fees that have ranged from \$50,000 to \$70,000 for services that their web site describes in purely commercial terms: "MIT's Industrial Liaison Program (ILP) is your one-stop shop for MIT expertise. The vast resources of MIT—one of the world's outstanding research universities—can provide a rich vein of technological and managerial innovation that will help sustain your competitive advantage for decades to come."<sup>64</sup> Today, quite a few universities are following these examples—and in my view are right to charge corporations for their work. After all, many corporations have for years been the beneficiaries of university research—isn't it only fitting that they now return the favor?

Still, the question must be raised of whether there is a danger that education will become a well-defined business ruled by the law of supply and demand. Adrianna Kezar, associate professor for higher education, University of Southern California, suggests it is, writing in a recent research report, "With most of the observable trends in higher education moving in the direction of responding to the demands of business, new technology, distance education and building partnerships with nonacademic communities, the humanities and the centrality of classroom teaching are being side-stepped."<sup>65</sup>

Given these concerns, it seems evident that a major challenge for universities, both in the United States and increasingly, abroad, is how to maintain their independence as their relationships with the business sector grow more

interdependent. Perhaps in this day and age one cannot live without the other, but we must be watchful to ensure that the independence of universities and the objectivity of their research is not compromised.

## The Rights and Responsibilities of the Faculty

Today, it is not just the academic integrity of the university that is sometimes under assault but also the vitality of the faculty. If the faculty is the core of the university, as I firmly believe it is, then it follows that the university is as strong, or as weak, as its faculty. Anything that fragments or diminishes the faculty also fragments and diminishes the university. Hence, I view the widespread trend toward part-time faculty as a major factor that may eventually undermine the faculty and the strength of the university.

In recent years we've reached the point where most teachers are part-timers, adjuncts and graduate students. In fact, the growth of part-time faculty has been phenomenal, nearly doubling between 1970 and 2003, from 22 percent of the faculty to 44.<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, administrators rely on these part-timers to reduce class sizes and to teach more subjects at more times, including nights and weekends. In doing so, the major motivation seems to be to reduce university costs by paying part-timers a small fraction of what tenured faculty earn for a similar amount of work.

A report released by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce,<sup>67</sup> an association of the leaders of disciplinary societies, confirms the growing dependency by higher education institutions on part-timers. After surveying departments in ten social science and humanities fields to discover which types of faculty members

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<sup>64</sup> [http://ilp-www.mit.edu/display\\_page.a4d?key=H1](http://ilp-www.mit.edu/display_page.a4d?key=H1)

<sup>65</sup> Adrianna J. Kezar, "Faculty: ERIC Trends 1999-2000," ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, U.S. Department of Education, Institute for Education Policy Studies, ERIC #ED-446652, 2000.

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<sup>66</sup> <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005172.pdf> (p. 7).

<sup>67</sup> *Who Is Teaching In U.S. College Classrooms? A Collaborative Study of Undergraduate Faculty, Fall 1999.*

teach what courses, and what kinds of pay and benefits the professors receive, the coalition made these findings: Freestanding composition programs have by far the highest proportion of classes taught by part-time and graduate-student instructors (31 and 34 percent, respectively) and the lowest taught by tenure-track instructors (15 percent). Except in history and art history, full-time tenure-track professors teach fewer than half of the introductory undergraduate courses offered. In English, composition, foreign languages, and philosophy, full-time tenure-track instructors teach only a fraction of such courses, ranging from 7 percent to 34 percent. In different disciplines, graduate-student instructors teach anywhere from 7 percent to 34 percent of all undergraduate classes, and up to 42 percent of introductory courses.<sup>68</sup>

Let's face reality: more and more, part-timers resemble piece workers, comprising a growing underclass in the ranks of the faculty. Their status is reflected in their pay and the absence of benefits: in recent years, only 23 percent of history departments have offered any benefits to part-timers, while in other disciplines, only about 40 percent offered benefits. As for salary, even teaching four courses a term, part-time faculty members are paid at a rate—less than \$3,000 per course on average—that puts them in an equivalent salary range to fast-food workers and baggage porters.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, if a class should be canceled for lack of enrollment, which can occur a few weeks into the semester, the adjunct instructor may not be paid at all. They typically do not have the use of a computer or office and, in some places, aren't even allowed to buy an on-campus parking permit or have their names listed in the campus phone directory.

68 "Report Details Colleges' Heavy Reliance on Part-Time Instructors," by Ana Marie Cox, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 22, 2000.

69 *ibid.*

The increasing shift to a part-time faculty also poses a major threat to academic freedom. As was noted in the *The Chronicle of Higher Education*:<sup>70</sup> "Here's a news flash for people who care about academic freedom: Half the professoriate does not have it. Adjuncts are getting dumped for things tenure-track scholars do with impunity—teaching controversial material, fighting grade changes, organizing unions. One part-timer was dropped after trying to talk about pornography in an ethics class. Another was ditched after racist words came up in a communications course. Then there was the professor who got fired for harassment after he mentioned tampons and anal sex in a pathology class."

In this type of situation, of course, the controversial statement or research project is not mentioned in the letter of dismissal. The offending part-time instructor is simply told that his or her contract isn't being renewed because of declining enrollment, a scheduling conflict or lack of budget or some other administrative excuse. We all know tenure is not a perfect system. Many things are wrong with it, but, on the whole, it has protected academic freedom. Without it, inadequate job security and related concerns about income and professional advancement may nurture the worst kind of censorship—self-censorship. And that, in fact, may be why we hear so little publicly from faculty members about national and international issues confronting the United States and the world.

The lack of job security and academic freedom inevitably takes its toll on the quality of teaching by part-timers. P.D. Lesko, the head of the National Adjunct Faculty Guild, has said that part-timers "are terrified of being

70 Alison Schneider, "To Many Adjunct Professors, Academic Freedom Is a Myth," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 10, 1999, p. A18.

rigorous graders, terrified to deal with complaints about the course materials, terrified to deal with plagiarists. A lot of them are working as robots. They go in, they teach, they leave. No muss, no fuss.” But Lesko adds: “If you’re afraid to give an honest grade or an honest opinion, you’re not teaching.”<sup>71</sup>

Essentially, the challenge posed by the trend toward part-time faculty is the erosion of quality in institutions of higher education. Academic freedom cannot thrive in a setting where half the faculty do not have secure jobs, and universities cannot easily separate economic security from academic freedom and autonomy.

In that connection, it is useful to revisit the concept of academic freedom as well as how and why it took hold in the United States. A seminal model of academic freedom developed in Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where such academic leaders as Nicholas Gundling, Rector of the University of Halle, and Wilhelm von Humboldt defended the freedom to teach and the freedom to learn.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, Humboldt cited academic freedom as one of the essential principles of the modern university when he founded the renowned University of Berlin in 1812.<sup>73</sup> The position of professors in Germany after the reunification of the country in 1870 under Chancellor Bismarck, however, was protected by their status as civil servants and hence, they could only be removed from a post for due cause. There were also more traditionally American antecedents to academic freedom. Arthur Levine, president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, has described the period between the 1870s

and the first World War as one in which the faculty suffered a great deal of interference from businesses, donors, Trustees, government and religious organizations. Levine writes, “At universities across the country from Stanford to Yale and Vanderbilt to Wisconsin, professors were fired or threatened with discharge for taking what were judged the wrong sides of controversial issues such as Darwinism, public ownership of railroads, immigration, alcohol prohibition, bimetallism and U.S. entry into World War I. The academic remedy for these intrusions,” Levine notes, “was the creation of tenure, a mechanism designed to insure professors academic freedom by granting them permanent appointments or lifelong employment after a probationary period.”<sup>74</sup>

In any event, it was not until the early twentieth century that the idea of shared governance, the centrality of the faculty and academic freedom prevailed in the American university. A major player in this struggle was the American Association of University Professors, and especially its Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure. A significant landmark was the committee’s first report, in 1915, which was very influential in promoting academic freedom as an essential prerequisite for research, instruction and the development of leaders and experts in the service of the public. Essentially, the committee maintained that professors should be accountable primarily to the public and to their profession, and that university governance should recognize those priorities. In one of its more colorful passages arguing for the right of free inquiry, the report asserted that “Such freedom is the breath in the nostrils of all scientific activity.”<sup>75</sup>

71 *ibid.*

72 Paulsen, F. (1919). *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts. Erster Band* (pp. 534-535). Leipzig: Verlag von Veit.

73 Fallon, D. (1980). *The German university: A heroic ideal in conflict with the modern world* (pp. 28-29). Boulder, CO: Colorado Associated University Press.

74 Arthur Levine, “The Soul of the University,” *2000 Annual Report*, Teachers College, Columbia University.

75 Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger, *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955).

Academic freedom has emerged and survived in America, but we all know that freedom is always tested. During the nation's wars and the Cold War, there were many assaults against academic freedom—usually under the banner of nationalism, patriotism, or national security. Thankfully, these assaults have generally been thwarted, and the setbacks have been temporary. Academic freedom has become an integral part of the fabric of our university and our democracy. It has become intertwined with the First Amendment protection of free speech. The First Amendment and academic freedom go hand in hand, but academic freedom may be more powerful because the university provides an institutional context for collective as well as individual exercise of free speech—the university, in essence, provides a public forum for free inquiry and speech. Academic freedom has been the hallmark of our democracy, repeatedly supported by our courts. In a 1957 United States Supreme Court decision, the Court stated: “To impose any straight jacket upon the intellectual leaders in our colleges and universities would imperil the future of our nation... Teachers and students must always remain free to inquire, to study, and to evaluate, to gain maturity and understanding; otherwise our civilization will stagnate and die.”<sup>76</sup> And ten years later, the Court called academic freedom “of transcendent value to all of us,” and described the classroom as the “marketplace of ideas.”<sup>77</sup>

People have criticized academic freedom for allowing cynics, radicals, and even racists and all kinds of people to express all kinds of opinions. But a suppressed opinion, I believe, is worse than an offensive one. (In a classroom, for example, a professor should be free to admit a particular bias towards a particular point of

view about a subject or an issue and to express that point of view. It is, in fact, the professor's responsibility to be honest about such leanings with his or her students. It is also the professor's responsibility to provide students with a bibliography or other means of learning about conflicting ideas and opinions.) Freedom of speech, academic freedom, cannot be rationed and cannot be dispensed piecemeal; it is a single entity belonging to all. The hallmark of a university cannot be the presence of a little bit of intellectual freedom, or freedom just behind closed doors, or freedom just for liberals, or just for conservatives or just for radicals, or the exclusive domain of certain organized groups. No, academic freedom must defend the most outspoken, principled and controversial of views—even those held by “a minority of one.”

Here, the name Bertrand Russell comes to mind. A philosopher and a mathematician, Russell was an early supporter of women's suffrage, advocated free love, and labor's right to strike; he was also a pacifist who oddly, also defended the use of violence. As we know, he suffered job losses and imprisonment for spreading his views.<sup>78</sup> On one occasion, he was offered and then denied a professorship at the College of the City of New York following criticism and a lawsuit opposing his appointment. Among other things, the lawsuit described him as being “lecherous, salacious, libidinous, lustful, erotomaniac...irreverent, narrow-minded, untruthful, and bereft of moral fibre” and described his philosophy as, “just cheap, tawdry, worn-out, patched-up fetishes, devised for the purpose of misleading the people.” The New York Supreme Court agreed, ruling in 1940 that it was unprepared to create a “chair of indecency” at the university. Russell's irreverent

<sup>76</sup> United States Supreme Court, *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, 354 U.S. 234 (1957).

<sup>77</sup> United States Supreme Court, *Keyishian v. Board of Regents of the State University of New York*, 385 U.S. 589 (1967).

<sup>78</sup> Spartacus Educational, Teaching History Online, <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/TUrusell.htm>. See also, *Current Biography: Who's News and Why*, ed. Maxine Block (The H.W. Wilson Company, 1941.)

response was to cite the court ruling with other degrees and honors on the title page of one of his books. It read, “Judiciously pronounced unworthy to be Professor of Philosophy at the College of the City of New York (1940).”<sup>79</sup>

Such censorship is no laughing matter, of course. And we know that the alternatives to academic freedom and free speech are ultimately Orwellian and, therefore, unacceptable. At our universities we want to know, and we need to know, what everyone thinks. To think without prejudice and to teach without fear are central to the mission of our universities.

Just as important, academic freedom provides a venue for scholars to be wildly creative in their research, to investigate anything of interest without being constrained by marketplace concerns. This is essential. After all, developing theory is as important as developing practical knowledge. And big ideas generally evolve from small ideas, and small ideas, from smaller ones, still. There really is no such thing as useless knowledge, as the legendary educator Abraham Flexner argued in an essay, appropriately entitled, “The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge.” He also noted the paradox that we must live with: namely, that human curiosity—and not societal need—has been the driving force behind most of the really great discoveries benefiting mankind.<sup>80</sup>

So the campus venue for academic freedom is, I believe, a societal necessity. Unfortunately, much of society doesn’t appreciate this, and so it remains vulnerable. In his book, *The Story of American Freedom*, Eric Foner writes: “Americans have sometimes believed they enjoy the greatest freedom of all—freedom from history... But if history teaches anything, it is that

the definitions of freedom and of the community entitled to enjoy it are never fixed or final.”<sup>81</sup>

To many people, academic freedom is the nutty stuff that goes on inside the Ivory Tower. On some past occasions, the late Senator William Proxmire, perhaps unwittingly, promoted this stereotype with his Golden Fleece awards that publicized apparent examples of what he called the “wasteful, ridiculous or ironic use of the taxpayers’ money.”<sup>82</sup> He gave one of his awards for a federal research grant entitled, “The Sexual Behavior of the Screw-worm Fly.” That, of course, targeted the university for ridicule, which Proxmire subsequently regretted. Years later, at a seminar on biological methods of pest control, he gave special praise to the study on the screw-worm fly for having advanced knowledge in the critical field of pest control.<sup>83</sup>

I believe that if our houses of intellect become timid, defensive or apathetic about academic freedom, freedom of inquiry and freedom of speech, the effect on society, in general, and democracy, in particular, will be devastating. It is the university’s role to preserve individual rights and to respect individual dignity, as it is equally the university’s obligation to cultivate in the individual a fidelity to the transcendent principles that define the institution and nurture the community. The university’s most compelling challenge is to achieve a fruitful balance between respecting the right of its individual members and organizations to operate freely—and fostering a climate for constructive engagement and honest exchange

81 Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998).

82 Taxpayers for Common Sense, “Senator William Proxmire and the History of the Golden Fleece Award, web site: <http://www.taxpayer.net/awards/goldenfleece/about.htm#original>.

83 Richard C. Atkinson, “The Golden Fleece, Science Education, and U.S. Science Policy.” (Lecture delivered at the University of California at Berkeley November 10, 1997.)

79 Christopher J. Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1994).

80 Abraham Flexner, “The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge,” *Harper’s Magazine*, October, 1939.

of ideas. In such an atmosphere the university should be able to educate leaders who will help solve some of our vexing political, social and economic problems—not only in this country but also around the world.

### Fair and Balanced?

The debate around academic freedom will be with us as long as there are universities, a free press and—at least in the United States—the First Amendment remains sacrosanct. However, it remains a constant item of discussion for academics and others, and is certainly never far from the thoughts of university leaders. In June 2005, in fact, 21 presidents, vice-chancellors and rectors of American and international universities signed their names to the *Report of the First Global Colloquium of University Presidents*, which was held at Columbia University.<sup>84</sup> One section of the report describes academic freedom this way: “At its simplest, academic freedom may be defined as the freedom to conduct research, teach, speak, and publish, subject to the norms and standards of scholarly inquiry, without interference or penalty, wherever the search for truth and understanding may lead.”

In theory, the above definition seems clear-cut enough to build a university upon, but in practice as the twenty-first century rolls on into its first full decade, modern times have proven that the quest for knowledge and understanding often finds itself in a losing battle when it bumps up against political correctness. The idea of being fair and balanced may have become a cliché, but it is often, nowadays, almost a challenge, because everybody seems to have a different idea of what “fair and balanced” means. In many cases, what people actually mean by the balanced part of that equation is really that they want a particular

argument to tilt in the direction of what *they* believe. In my view, this is a growing problem in society at large, but especially so on the nation’s campuses. Let me cite an example: the web site [www.noindoctrination.org](http://www.noindoctrination.org), which describes itself as having been created by those “who are disturbed that sociopolitical agendas have been allowed to permeate college courses and orientation programs.”<sup>85</sup> On this web site, there were recently 170 postings complaining about lectures and professors that were “objectionable,” “biased,” or even “excessively” biased. One can only conclude that what some students found “biased” must fit snugly into the political, social or cultural belief systems of others. Another manifestation of the move toward institutionalizing political correctness is the trend, on some campuses, of creating “free speech zones,” where anyone can declaim any position they want—which will be objectionable to some, supported by others—as long as they do so within a designated area.<sup>86</sup>

One problem about this emphasis on “correct” or “objectionable” speech is the focus on language, on words. All the effort spent on rooting out the *way* things are said seems to me an easy way to avoid dealing with social, political and cultural issues of such depth and implication for our national life that they defy simple linguistic calisthenics. It is often difficult to separate the fine lines that divide communication from insult and the process of trying to do so can be paralyzing to the point of inhibiting not only speech but also independent thought.

That is why I welcomed each new class of students to Brown University by citing Richard Sheridan, whose 1779 play, *The Critic*, has one of my favorite lines about the paucity of independent thinkers. He wrote, “The number

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/president/communications%20files/globalcolloquium.htm>

<sup>85</sup> <http://www.noindoctrination.org/aboutus.shtml>

<sup>86</sup> There have been instances, such as in 2005 at Texas Tech University, where courts have declared such zones illegal, as they restrict free speech.

of those who go through the fatigue of judging for themselves is very small indeed!”<sup>87</sup> I urged each class of students to undergo this necessary fatigue and to resist pressures to conform from teachers, peers or those with simplistic political or religious catechisms promising to provide instant solutions to complex problems. I told students that their own thoughts, convictions, beliefs, ideas and principles—their identities and their characters—are their most precious possessions. Change them, if you must, I said, but do not abdicate your intellectual prerogatives, your independent thought, and free will. And do not become victims of cynicism and nihilism, nor passive adherents of so-called “political correctness” because doing so trivializes, marginalizes and ignores our society’s real issues and challenges, including poverty, racism, sexism, discrimination and injustice. The use of the right lingo and jargon is not a substitute for thorough analysis, sound public policy and passionate commitment to action and social change. It is often a way of avoiding taking any action at all.

The pressures on campus to try to hit the constantly moving target of “political correctness” adds more layers of difficulty to the already complex task of trying to distinguish between, for example, free speech and offensive behavior or between students’ individual rights and the rights of the community, in those instances when these may be in conflict. Many universities have a code of conduct and, upon admission, new students knowingly and willingly agree to respect and abide by that code. However, getting such consent from students is not a guaranteed recipe for preventing subsequent conflicts.

When such conflicts do arise, it occasionally falls to the president of the university, as

the ultimate court of appeal, to make what may seem to be Solomonic decisions. As difficult as such episodes may be, presidents should use them, along with other conflicts and crises that arise to uphold institutional values and principles. Even in those instances when a controversy becomes a cause célèbre, it can be an opportunity for the president, the deans and other educators and administrators at the university to use the occasion to teach, to educate, to start important discussions about the truly definitive issues of our times such as balancing rights and responsibility, questions about ethics, about the individual’s relationship to the community—even about the concept of what really are “fighting words.” Here, I should note that I am not talking about an abstraction: in 1991, I faced a major crisis when a student, already on probation for misconduct, was brought before the student-faculty disciplinary committee for shouting racial and religious epithets in a student courtyard at two a.m., while intoxicated. The incident was troubling for everyone because it involved many important issues. Had the student not already been on probation, one could have perhaps rationalized *putting* him on probation if this had been a first incident of misconduct, but it was not, so the disciplinary committee recommended that the student be expelled. The decision was appealed to me, and I backed the committee’s decision because if I had not, it would have brought the validity of our student code of conduct into question as well as the legitimacy or authority of the disciplinary committee itself.

Though my decision was accepted on campus, it sparked a major national debate. Attacks came both from the left and the right; some said it was the hallmark of a “brown-shirt fascist,” and others that it smacked of Puritanism or even Communism. The editorial pages of many newspapers weighed in on the subject.

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<sup>87</sup> Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Critic* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1779), p. 37.

The episode also created a fascinating coalition of supporters and opponents. Those in favor of my decision ranged from Bill Buckley to Pat Buchanan to Richard Cohen of *The Washington Post* to Clarence Page of the *Chicago Tribune*. Those who disagreed included Nat Hentoff of the *Village Voice* and both the Rhode Island and national ACLU.

As a historian, I was interested to see how the distortion of facts provided ideological weapons for both proponents and opponents of my decision. Some of those who argued with my decision, for example, characterized the incident as having taken place in “the early morning” without specifying that it was two a.m., or said it involved “shouting in the air” without stressing the fact that the courtyard in which the incident took place—unlike Harvard Yard, for example—was very small, with student-occupied dormitories all around, or explaining that students were awakened without also adding that one of the students who witnessed the incident had recorded all the epithets and threats on tape. On the other end of the spectrum, there were those who pointed out that awakening students and then insulting and threatening them—even attempting to hit them, only to be restrained by others—went beyond the limits of “free speech” into the realm of behavior. In regard to both sets of opinions, I was surprised by how many reporters and editorialists never bothered to talk to me about what happened but wrote about it anyway.

This compelled me to make my position about the situation very clear in an op-ed published in *The Washington Post* on April 3, 1991, in which I said, “There is a difference between unpopular ideas expressed in a public context and epithets delivered in the context of harassing, intimidating or demeaning behavior. At Brown, we expect students to know the difference.”

In commenting on the incident and my remarks, a *New York Times* editorial from May 12, 1991, stated, “When the hate is egregious, a university owes itself a firm, principled response.” The *Brown Daily Herald* on April 12, 1991, further emphasized this distinction between speech and action. “[The student] was not expelled for his opinions, or for his arguments,” wrote editor-in-chief James Kaplan. “He was expelled from Brown for verbally abusing other students.” The *Herald* revisited the arguments surrounding the expulsion in 1997, writing that, “Many arguments for speech restrictions deny that hateful speech is protected by the Constitution. Such arguments are based on the fact that hate speech does not advance the spirit of free speech. An essay written by judge and lawyer Simon Rifkind emphasizes this point. ‘Fighting words are unprotected because they do not advance the civil discourse which the First Amendment is designed to promote,’ Rifkind said. ‘A university is a very special community. Speech which is not civil is at odds with the purpose of the campus.’”<sup>88</sup>

Another issue that came up in the context of student and community rights at both the University of Pennsylvania and later at Brown, was expanding the university’s nondiscrimination code to include sexual orientation. The University of Pennsylvania’s Code of Student Conduct includes “the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of . . .sexual orientation. . . .”<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Brown’s Standards of Student Conduct states, “All members of the Brown University community are also entitled to live in an environment free from harassment on the basis of such characteristics as . . .sexual orientation. . . .”<sup>90</sup> In years past, there were times

88 “Speech or Harassment? U. Fights Speech That ‘Sets People Down,’” by Gregory Cooper, *Brown Daily Herald*, October 3, 1997.

89 <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/conduct.html>

90 [http://www.brown.edu/Student\\_Services/Office\\_of\\_Student\\_Life/randr/conduct/index.html](http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Office_of_Student_Life/randr/conduct/index.html)

when this issue dominated the agenda at both institutions. Several years ago, the problem of protecting rights relating to sexual orientation in the university community came to the fore again in regard to allowing military recruiters on campus. The issue lay in the fact that the Pentagon does not allow openly gay individuals to serve in the armed forces. How, then, can a university that bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation square its own code of conduct with one that many on campus view as discriminatory? In March 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court answered that question, at least in part, by ruling in the case of *Rumsfeld v. FAIR* that colleges and universities that received federal funds must allow military recruiters on campus. (Now-retired Justice Sandra Day O'Connor did point out, however, that there was nothing in the ruling stopping school personnel and students from making their objections about military recruiting known by posting disclaimers or openly protesting.<sup>91</sup>)

In one specific case I dealt with, I had received letters and petitions from students asking that Brown ban military recruiters from campus because the armed forces discriminate against homosexuals. I decided to research the issue and release a statement about it. Looking into the issue, I discovered that Communist countries (China, Cuba, Vietnam and so forth) had anti-gay legislation, as did some Muslim countries, as well as others. If we were going to discriminate against the United States government for its policies, such as those that adversely affected homosexuals, then wouldn't we have to discriminate against all governments that had similar

91 A handful of educational institutions have chosen to do more than protest. The case of *Rumsfeld v. FAIR* was brought by the Forum for Academic and Institutional Rights (FAIR), a group of law schools and professors. Before the Supreme Court ruling, the New York Law School, William Mitchell College of Law in Minnesota, and Vermont Law School, for example—all independent of larger universities—had adopted a policy of foregoing federal funding in order to continue to ban military recruiters.

policies and all their representatives? What did that mean, for example, in regard to a group of Cuban poets who were expected to visit Brown, a great cultural breakthrough promoted by some of the same students who protested against the military's anti-gay policies—should we even allow them on campus? And was the university ready to forego federal funding over this issue? Where would all of this end?

I concluded that I could not ban military recruiters from the Brown campus nor “ban” students from exercising their right to be interviewed by military recruiters, though I did point out that students could certainly continue to protest against them or boycott the military. For me personally, this was an ironic situation because I had helped to make nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation an official policy not only at the University of Pennsylvania but at Brown, as well....

In many ways, the legacy of the 1960s was still with us on campus in terms of sit-ins, the occupation of campus buildings, protest marches and so on, which continued to take place at universities around the nation in the 1990s—including Brown—over issues ranging from the Gulf War to racism, to tuition hikes, to the rights of campus workers, to financial aid, to disinvestment, etc. In general, I welcomed the fact that many students cared deeply enough about issues to mobilize in protest (or support) of an issue, but many of them acted in the belief that their activities should be without any adverse consequences. Often—and this seemed to be a continuing routine—what happened was that students would organize a demonstration; present “nonnegotiable” demands; then seize a building that they considered a symbol of university authority; after that they would be arrested; and then they would ask for amnesty. Such a building takeover happened only once during my tenure at Brown, when students

occupied a university building, demanding that the university declare itself a “need-blind” institution. Over 400 or so students, mostly freshmen, participated in this action.

Rhode Island state law prohibits the occupation of school buildings, so a judge issued an injunction ordering the students to leave the building. The students refused to obey the judge’s order. They wanted to be and were arrested for having violated that and several other state laws (and because they had also violated university regulations). Following tradition, the students asked for amnesty. I refused to grant it, angering both the students and their parents. I praised the students for their convictions, even their actions, but since they had invoked the names of Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi—some even Lenin, Marx, and Che Guevara—I pointed out that the above individuals had never asked for amnesty for their actions but used even their arrests “to educate” their respective publics about the causes for which they were risking their freedom. Furthermore, I would not “punish” the students with community service, as some suggested, because I considered the performance of community service to be an honor, not a punishment. In the end, the students received sanctions and probation, and apologized to the staff members in the building at the time they occupied it, because some of these staffers had been threatened and frightened. My point, of course, was once again to seize the occasion for teaching—to remind us all that actions have consequences. So do principles, and acting on behalf of a belief or a principle also means accepting the responsibility of taking a stand on behalf of what you believe.

### Admissions

In my forty-plus years of working in academia, I’ve seen more figurative blood spilled over academic politics than in the “real world” of

political infighting. But a close runner-up in terms of what causes anger, tension, anxiety and controversy on- and off-campus is the issue of admissions. Most universities go to great lengths to explain their admissions policies to potential students and their parents, but the process of applying to and being accepted—or rejected—by a particular college or university still seems mysterious to many, and often, fraught with inconsistencies. As one who has dealt with the issue at close hand, let me offer some observations.

Both private and public universities, especially the most distinguished of them, want to be national—even international—in the composition of their student body. Hence, their common goal is to be as representative of the nation and the world as possible. They try to attract a widely diverse pool of international students, which is considered by many universities not only to be a kind of badge of honor in this age of globalization, but also an important way of exposing American students to the rest of the world while at the same time acquainting people from different regions of the globe with the best of the United States. Universities also try to admit students from as many states of the union as possible. It’s always difficult to enroll students from the smallest states, especially places like North and South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, etc. In that connection, whenever someone asks me about how to get their child into a prominent Ivy League university, I tell them that in addition to having good grades, try to have your child graduate from high school in someplace like North Dakota and have an unusual extra-curricular activity, like playing the tuba or the harp, and his or her chances of being accepted wherever they want will increase tenfold.

In truth, prominent colleges and universities could fill all their freshman classes by

admitting only students from a few dozen prep schools and excellent, elite public schools—but they don't do this. All universities make an effort to truly be representative of the nation and the world by actively recruiting the best, brightest and most talented students they can find from every walk of life, every ethnicity, every class, race, background and income group.

Initially, after the race and class barriers were first torn down by legal decisions such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, the focus was on making all levels of education, including colleges and universities, more accessible to African Americans, but that effort soon expanded to include Hispanics, Native Americans, Asians and other minority groups, as well as women. Nowadays, most universities also attempt to accommodate the disabled as well, by making classrooms, dormitories and other campus facilities and services accessible to the physically challenged.

But to return to our earlier metaphor of the city-state, universities have other needs in terms of the students they want, or need, to admit: they need athletes to fill out dozens of athletic teams; actors, actresses and dancers to perform in campus productions; musicians to join the orchestra; singers for the choir; writers to staff the institution's literary journals; and of course, students who want to pursue a particular academic direction so that one can match a college or university's academic majors with requisite talent. Institutions of higher education also need journalists for the student newspapers, which—in a trend that defies national statistics indicating that newspaper reading among all audiences, especially the young, is on the decline—are thriving. In fact, they are doing so well that some, like the University of Texas at Austin's *Daily Texan* and the University of Georgia's *Red and Black*, have been able to attract major

mainstream advertising. According to a recent article in *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Daily Texan*, in fact, with a circulation of 28,000 and a web site that attracts 10,600 daily users, “is the core of what has evolved into a \$2.3 million multimedia operation which also includes radio and TV stations, a humor magazine, and an online search tool for apartments. ‘We’re not just selling a newspaper anymore,’ says Brian Tschoepe, student ad director of Texas Student Media.”<sup>92</sup> In essence, some of these newspapers are no longer amateur publications.

With everything universities seek in recruitment of students, there remains a perennial competition with peer institutions. That means, ironically enough, that the fewer students you accept, the better you look, because it means you're being selective—in terms of student measures of excellence. Of course, a university's choices must be affirmed later by an impressive graduation rate and graduate institutions they may choose for their advanced academic work, as well as where they end up on the ladder of success.

Universities must also deal with “legacies”—the expectation on the part of families whose young men and women have been attending a certain institution for generations and have not only entrusted their youngsters' education to the school but also rewarded it by being financially generous. In my experience at Brown, legacy admissions were often considered a slam-dunk by parents and grandparents, and when this was not the case, these individuals were often extremely angry with the university. I certainly always heard about it. I explained many times that admission to Brown was not a birthright and that more than an “inherited” legacy was at issue: the university was committed to striving for a diverse student body, and that meant

92 “Big Media on Campus,” by Emily Steel, *The Wall Street Journal Online*, August 9, 2006.

not only racial and ethnic but also geographic diversity, as well as diversity across disciplines and areas of study. There is another catch to the issue of legacy admissions: the university is expected to accept legacy students, but these students are themselves free to choose *not* to come, which may cause parents to feel chagrined after they have made great efforts to get their child admitted. The problem of future generations of these same families may also arise: if the child of an alumnus chooses not to attend the alum's university, what about the children of that child, and so on? How far into the future does the expected "pact" between the university and its graduates extend? At many universities, the whole spectrum of issues surrounding legacy admissions continues to be contentious.

Until recently, a main focus of resentment about admissions was on race, and whether minorities were getting, or should get, "preferential treatment"—and if so, how much? By what formula? Now, one often hears allegations that women, or athletes, or those who can pay their own way without any financial aid, are given special consideration for admission to certain colleges and universities. In the past, quotas existed to keep certain categories of students *out* of certain institutions, or at least, to keep their numbers down. A number of studies have revealed exclusionary practices aimed at Jews and Catholics—which had spread to African Americans and Asians—that were carried out by, among others, Harvard University.<sup>93</sup> Other barriers to racial and ethnic minorities were also deployed.

93 *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton*, by Jerome Karabel (Houghton Mifflin, 2005). Similarly, *The Qualified Student: A History of Selective College Admission in America* by Harold Wechsler (1977), *The Half-Opened Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900-1970* by Marcia Graham Synnott (1979), *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale* by Dan A. Oren (1986), and *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940* by David O. Levine (1986).

When it comes to admissions, there is no way to satisfy everyone or to be absolutely just, because it is a very complex process. There is no "scientific" method that guarantees complete automatic objectivity or some perfect balance. For example, there are those who suggest that the percentage of men and women at a university should be equal. At Brown, we did not attempt to create any ratio like that even though it would have helped us in dealing with various aspects of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Having more women than men, ironically, triggered a crisis under Title IX, which prohibits discrimination based on gender in athletics programs of educational institutions that receive government funds. We were proud of the fact that we had a wide array of varsity teams for both men and women—one of the largest programs in the nation—so the fact that we were sued under Title IX came as quite a surprise.

What actually happened was based on a budgetary decision: in 1991, the Department of Athletics changed the standing and financial status of four small varsity teams—two men's teams (water polo and golf) and two women's teams (gymnastics and volleyball)—from university-funded status to donor-funded club status. The U.S. district court ruled against Brown in 1995, saying that the university had to ensure not only equal opportunity but also equal *participation*. The judge said that Brown was not in compliance because its female sports participation rate, almost 42 percent, was not proportionate to the female student population, which was 51 percent. But as an Ivy League school that couldn't give athletic scholarships to build or maintain sports teams, Brown had little control over women's participation other than offering many opportunities to women athletes, which we did: only Harvard had more women's athletic teams. The

decision, which made the front page of *The New York Times*, sent shock waves across the country, igniting a national debate that continues to this day. Clearly, admissions policies and practices—long a source of friction and a target of criticism in the past, will continue to be so for years to come.

Still, no matter what the pressures—whether from the alumni, the development office (who are, for example, eager to maintain alumni loyalty to ensure a steady source of giving and are therefore sometimes too inclined to lobby on behalf of alumni-related applicants), or from any other source, inside or outside the university—the president cannot afford to have a laissez faire attitude about the admissions practices of his or her institution because that can lead to a slippery slope. There may be the occasional violation of established rules, but if “looking the other way” becomes an acceptable, if unspoken policy, it will eventually be harmful to the institution’s reputation, and increase cynicism, and worse, the students admitted because of “preferential treatment” will be burdened with knowing—as others will know—that they did not gain admission on their own merit but because of someone’s generational loyalty, purse strings or political intervention.

At the University of Pennsylvania, as a general rule, I did not intervene in the admissions process in any way. The one time I did become involved, the situation devolved into a case of the dean of admissions versus the dean of the faculty of arts and sciences. When I had recommended the daughter of a foreign diplomat for admission to Penn, I assumed that the dean of admissions would have the courtesy to notify me beforehand of the fate of the nominee. Instead, the first I heard was from the diplomat that his daughter had been turned down. I considered this a breach of etiquette on the part of the dean of admissions

and I challenged his authority to the provost, and the young woman was admitted. I was wrong. The diplomat’s daughter was an average student who, under normal circumstances, would not have been admitted. Chastened by this experience, I was very careful, when I became president of Brown, to distance myself from the actual process of admissions and to protect the dean of admissions’ authority.

Naturally, there were still many Trustees, faculty, and donors who wrote letters to me on behalf of candidates but, as a rule, I did not act on them. As I recently told a reporter who wrote a book about these issues, during my time at Brown—and since I left—over 100 Armenians applied to the university, but very few were accepted. As I am myself Armenian, I joked that being Armenian was an important criteria for being rejected by Brown... No less than the spiritual leader of the Armenian Apostolic Church, who had been my teacher, wrote to me about a candidate from England and I had to inform him that the student had not been accepted. I was also asked, on occasion, whether—as the former head of The New York Public Library—I “rewarded” the benefactors of the Library and their offspring who wanted to attend Brown. My simple answer was that even if I had wanted to, I could not, and if I had tried, I would have left a legion of alienated people behind me.

At most universities, the greatest pressure on the admissions office comes from athletes and their supporters. Advocates for athletic programs want winning teams. They want the best athletes to be recruited. Supporters of athletics often become ardent promoters of candidates for all men’s and women’s sports. This is especially true at big universities with multi-million-dollar sports programs, where sports is important for the financial support of the university and a significant source of recruiting for the student

body. Brown was no exception. Lovers of Brown's athletic programs had formed a sports foundation incorporated outside of the university to support and promote athletics at Brown and to recruit scholar/athletes. The university had no direct authority over this foundation. Eventually, the chancellor and I made a joint decision to bring the foundation and its independent Board under the authority of the president in order to prevent possible circumventions of the university's admissions policies and to protect the dean of admissions from devoted, articulate, and powerful alumni sports advocates. I gave instructions that I must be informed of any interventions or attempted interventions in the admission process, because I wanted it to be absolutely clear that the dean of admissions was the final and ultimate authority on these matters. I also instructed the dean of admissions to bring to my attention all direct interventions on the part of Trustees in the admissions process in order to insulate the process.

I welcomed the fact that Brown had a committee of faculty and Trustees overseeing the admissions process in order to ensure its integrity. I once encouraged them to review a selection of admissions applications with names and other identifying information removed to see which applicants they'd accept or reject if they were the admissions office. They all said it was a sobering experience because of the difficulty of making such choices. For example, how do you weigh the importance of actual accomplishments against the potential you may see in a particular candidate? During a previous Brown administration, the dean of admissions was allowed to admit a number of "Tom Sawyers," taking a chance on them because they had the kind of potential that made them stand out from the crowd. During Brown's *Campaign for the Rising Generation*, it was rewarding to find that several of these "Tom Sawyers," now civic

leaders or successful businessmen and women, had endowed the dean of admissions position as a sign of their gratitude. Frankly, I think it's a good idea to allow the admissions dean five or ten positions on which to take a chance.

The issue of admissions is further complicated by the fact that all universities want to claim that they are need-blind—namely, that regardless of who a student is, where that student comes from, or what his or her needs are, the university will first look at the applicant's academic record and then admit the student without considering whether he or she can pay or not. But it is an unfortunate fact that many universities simply cannot afford the amount of financial aid required to provide admission based on a completely need-blind system. (To provide additional context for that observation, one should note that the National Center for Education Statistics estimates that approximately two-thirds of undergraduates rely on financial aid.) It's also a fact that in terms of Pell Grants, which were meant to equalize the field, the loan component of a student's aid package usually far outweighs the grant amount. Indeed, at the federal level, the major growth in financial aid has been in loans and tax credits for college attendance, not increases in the level of Pell Grant awards.<sup>94</sup> On top of all this, parents have a legitimate right to complain about the privacy issues involved in applying for financial aid, since they have to supply their tax returns and reveal the value of their home, savings, and other holdings.

During my tenure as president of Brown, we doubled the undergraduate scholarship fund, but how to provide tuition assistance to students who needed it while at the same time maintaining adequate support for all the other needs of

<sup>94</sup> "The Perfect Storm and the Privatization of Public Higher Education," by Ronald G. Ehrenberg, The Social Science Research Council, August 17, 2006. (Also *Change*, Jan/Feb. 2006. Vol. 38, No. 1.)

the university was a perpetual balancing act. I addressed these issues head on in 1992 when I formed the Ad Hoc Committee on Financial Aid to review the status and future of financial aid at Brown. That committee issued a report in September 1993. Even before that, in 1986, a special committee of the Brown Corporation had studied undergraduate financial aid and reaffirmed Brown's commitment to it. The 1986 committee noted the same challenges that confronted the 1992 committee when they wrote:

*"...we share the deeply-held conviction of the President...that we can not devote more than the current proportion of unrestricted annual income without an unacceptable conflict with other claims on the same limited resources for other critical University needs—most notably, adequate compensation for our faculty and staff; adequately supported libraries, laboratories, and classrooms; and adequately maintained facilities."<sup>95</sup>*

In 1990, in response to these concerns—namely that the amount of institutional grant aid funded from unrestricted university revenue was rising more rapidly than either tuition income or other university expenses—Brown instituted a new funding model for financial aid, which specified that: 1) Annual increases in the base budget for undergraduate financial aid would be indexed to the increase in total student charges, thereby guaranteeing an annual increase for the financial aid budget to ensure that financial assistance was not eroded over time; and 2) Income from new gifts of endowment earmarked for financial aid would be an enhancement to the base budget, increasing the funding available for financial aid.<sup>96</sup>

The result of these policy changes was a significant increase in the number of students on aid. In 1988, less than 30 percent of the

entering class was on financial aid. In 2000, the percentage receiving scholarships was closer to 38 percent. The financial aid budget had an average annual increase of 9.7 percent during the same period, while total student charges averaged a 5.4 percent increase annually.<sup>97</sup> In recent years Brown has revamped its financial aid program and, beginning with the Class of 2007, the university implemented a need-blind admissions policy.<sup>98</sup> Brown also eliminated a work-study requirement for first-year students beginning with the Class of 2006, and replaced those funds with additional scholarships.<sup>99</sup>

Of course, in addition to the majority of students who need some form of financial aid, there are families who can afford to pay tuition and other fees. This situation caused tensions on campus because these students often felt that their families were "subsidizing" financial aid for others, such as minorities. Sometimes non-minority students who were on financial aid also felt resentment in their belief that tuition assistance was targeted on the basis of race, not on financial need. In order to combat these attitudes, I made a point of conveying the message to the alumni that *no one* pays their full fare at Brown because tuition only covers a portion of the real costs of getting an education at the university. The rest of the money comes from the endowment, annual giving, research overhead, etc., and as a result, everybody in the university is being supported, in one way or another, by a whole variety of funding sources. Given all these issues, I have always thought that the tensions they cause would be eased if the term "financial aid" were changed to "scholarship," so that one could say that just about everyone who attends a university is "on scholarship," not just "the needy."

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> [http://financialaid.brown.edu/Cmx\\_Content.aspx?cpld=58](http://financialaid.brown.edu/Cmx_Content.aspx?cpld=58)

<sup>99</sup> *Black Issues in Higher Education*, October 7, 2004.

<sup>95</sup> Brown University, Alper Committee on Financial Aid, *Final Report*, May 5, 2000.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

Because as a student I was the beneficiary of scholarships from Stanford and other institutions, it was natural for me to have a strong partiality about securing as much financial aid as possible for American students. For example, while I was at Brown, I was advised that if I admitted three or four percent more foreign students, I would be able to declare need-blind admissions because these students paid full tuition. I couldn't embark on such an expediency because that would mean fewer places at the university for American students and I thought that they (and their parents) deserved the opportunity to attend Brown and to get as much financial assistance as possible.

In retrospect, I think that Stanford's system for providing a student's scholarship money was very wise: you didn't just get a letter saying *Congratulations*, but you actually received a check, with your name on it, which you had to go to an office at Stanford to cash. When I was a student, handing over that check really made me realize that I had actually merited a *scholarship*, not just a loan or financial aid, and that had a deep psychological impact on me. It made me aware that I had earned my place at the university but also that I had a responsibility to live up to the trust that the institution had put in me—and my future—by awarding the scholarship.

### Excellence as a Public Trust

Once a student has gone through what many consider to be the “torture” of filling out applications—often to many different universities—and finally being accepted, there is an expectation on their part, and on the part of their parents, that all their years of hard work in elementary, middle and high school, along with the financial sacrifice that many families have to make to afford higher education, are now going to pay off in terms of an excellent education. Public universities, in particular, feel

the weight of this expectation because they were conceived as public trusts to provide not only practical, utilitarian training and education but excellence as well, in all aspects of the teaching and learning that takes place on their campuses.

We must not forget that there was a time in our country when one did not need to fight for recognition of the fact that excellence, democracy and public service are compatible—that they are, in fact, supportive of one another. Indeed, some public universities—such as the City University of New York and the University of California, Berkeley—were for decades considered to be “public Harvards” and to represent the epitome of excellence as a public trust. Unfortunately, for the past several decades, the public has been led to believe that excellence, as a rule, pertains primarily to the private sector, a view that may have contributed to diminished support for public education. Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Irving M. Ives Professor of Industrial and Labor Relations and Economics at Cornell University and director of the Cornell Higher Education Research Institute, provides some insight into the economics of the situation, noting that at a time when enrollments in public higher education institutions are on the rise, soaring from less than 8 million in 1974 to more than 12 million in 2004, “it is perhaps remarkable that average state appropriations per full-time equivalent student at public higher education institutions have increased, on average, at an annual rate that has exceeded the rate of increase in consumer prices by about 0.6 percent a year (or remained almost flat if inflation is calculated not by the Consumer Price Index but according to the more realistic Higher Education Price Index). Given that state support for public higher education is one of the few real discretionary categories in state budgets and higher education is one of the few state agen-

cies that charges for its services, policymakers seem to have concluded that flat funding is all that public higher education can expect from the state.”<sup>100</sup> John D. Wiley, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, recently noted the effect of this phenomenon on public colleges and universities in his state, lamenting that, “More than a decade of state budget cuts... have left the base operating budgets of Wisconsin’s public higher education systems in the worst condition since the Great Depression.”<sup>101</sup> Across the country, the situation is the same, so it doesn’t seem likely that public higher education can expect any real funding increases in the foreseeable future. Educators will always try to do more with less, but we are clearly running out of less.

As a result, while Americans’ right of access to higher education remains intact, support for public higher education continues to deteriorate, forcing higher education institutions to sometimes sacrifice quality in order to make access as easy and widely available as possible. Even while bearing this burden, most public colleges and universities still strive to balance both their obligation to admit students from all walks of life and economic strata with the need to raise private monies in order to compensate for continuing funding cuts.

Today in the United States we have developed the notion that “elitist” is always a pejorative term, and always bears the stigma of class rather than the proud banner of achievement. I vividly remember a time when, addressing my students, I quoted Thomas Jefferson’s remark that, “Nature has wisely provided an aristocracy of virtue and talent for the direction of the interest of society...” One of the students objected to the statement, saying it was offensive because it favored the idea of

elitism. I explained that in my view, that just wasn’t true. An orchestra, for instance, needs a conductor—a person skilled and committed enough to *be* the conductor, and who has put in an enormous amount of work and effort to develop the knowledge and ability necessary to be the leader of the other musicians. The first violinist, also, has to work hard to achieve that first chair. Effort, excellence, skill and dedication are the hallmark of leaders, and, along with that orchestra I’ve used as an example, our society, our democracy, and our civilization needs talented, visionary leaders.

The late Pulitzer Prize winning cultural critic William A. Henry suggested that the “wrath directed at elitism”—such as that evidenced by my student—has to do with a kind of populist suspicion about intellectualism. Americans would be better off, he explains, if we understood elitism, instead, as characterized by “...respect toward leadership...esteem for accomplishment, especially when achieved through long labor and rigorous education... commitment to rationalism and scientific investigation; upholding of objective standards; most important, the willingness to assert that one idea, contribution or attainment is *better* than another.”<sup>102</sup>

To have an independent mind is not to be antisocial. Independent thinking is not an antisocial or elitist act, and indeed, universities need more people—students, faculty, and administrators—who welcome new ideas, celebrate the courage to be imaginative and encourage independence of mind. Without such people, the university community will become a stale and deadly place, and surrounded by such timid company, the president may not be able to rise to the occasion when it comes to taking a stand about a particular issue, or

100 Ehrenberg, op. cit.  
101 *Madison* magazine, November 2003.

102 *In Defense of Elitism*, by William A. Henry (Anchor, 1995).

speaking out in support of—or against—one side or another of a debate.

This became particularly apparent to me some years ago when the *Boston Globe* invited the presidents of New England-based universities to write an occasional column that would appear periodically and in which they could voice their opinions about major issues of the day. Only a handful of presidents ever took on the challenge, and their reluctance to make public statements about their position on various issues—unless somehow forced by circumstances to do so—continues to be the norm among higher education leaders today, which worries me. The reluctance of these individuals to speak publicly is not a sign of shyness or modesty. It arises from a self-induced fear of offending any possible constituency that might harm the university politically or financially.

Decades ago, university presidents—along with the CEOs of major American corporations—were expected to be national opinion leaders and take sides on various issues, even when they were controversial, but that is not the case today. Richard C. Levin, the president of Yale, thinks that may be the fault of the press itself, at least in the U.S. He says, “Today, the press has little interest in what a university president has to say, unless the president’s views are highly controversial. I have had a number of op-ed pieces rejected because they weren’t sufficiently controversial.”<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, he notes, “On my visits to China, India, Korea, and Mexico, I have given scores of interviews concerning my views on the global economy, international trade negotiations, intellectual property, and other topics related to my expertise as an economist. I have expressed my views on such subjects annually at the meetings of the World Economic Forum

in Davos, and I am frequently interviewed by the Chinese media on aspects of China’s economic development, even from my office in New Haven.”<sup>104</sup>

Levin may be right that the press is indeed looking for incendiary remarks rather than thoughtful analysis, but I don’t think that excuses us, as higher education leaders, from entering into the national conversation about important issues. (One particularly interested audience would certainly be the vast number of alumni who keep track of news about their school and its administration.) For example, before a federal judge’s landmark ruling in December 2005 against a Pennsylvania school board that wanted to include teaching intelligent design in a public school biology class, I am aware of only one university president who felt that the potential impact “of the challenge to science posed by religiously based opposition to evolution”<sup>105</sup> was so significant that he was compelled to discuss it publicly. That was Hunter R. Rawlings III, president of Cornell University, who was interim president on October 21, 2005 when he gave the State of the University Address and said, “I want to suggest that universities like Cornell can make a valuable contribution to the nation’s cultural and intellectual discourse. With a breadth of expertise that embraces the humanities and the social sciences as well as science and technology, we need to be engaging issues like evolution and intelligent design both *internally*, in the classroom...and in campus-wide debates, and also *externally* by making our voices heard in the spheres of public policy and politics.” While also asserting that intelligent design is not valid “as science,”<sup>106</sup> he called for efforts on the part of Cornell task forces to understand

103 *Yale Alumni Magazine*, March/April 2005.

104 *ibid.*

105 [http://www.cornell.edu/president/announcement\\_2005\\_1021.cfm](http://www.cornell.edu/president/announcement_2005_1021.cfm)

106 *ibid.*

“how to separate information from knowledge and knowledge from ideology; how to understand and address the ethical dilemmas and anxieties that scientific discovery has produced; and how to assess the influence of secular humanism on culture and society.”<sup>107</sup>

It is true that when university presidents *do* speak out on national, or even local issues, they are likely to be attacked by groups and individuals from all over the political spectrum. But when a university president is silent about issues that affect the nation, and hence, the future of his or her students, that silence itself may be perceived as a resounding statement that can be easily misinterpreted as indifference. As leaders, presidents of universities have an obligation to themselves, their students, their faculty, alumni, and to the very traditions and values of the institutions they serve to have the courage of their convictions, and speak out about them, with candor, honesty and confidence. They must be true to their principles, otherwise, why bother having any? If presidents don't publicly address important issues, they certainly cannot then accuse their students of complacency or disinterest because, by remaining mute, they counter their own exhortations for students to be true to *their* principles.

### **The Pulse of the University: Work and Respect**

Intellectual honesty and the courage to stand up for one's principles are certainly required ingredients for successful leadership. But in my opinion, there is another element that is equally essential, and that is having spent some time in the trenches. What that means in a university setting is that it's helpful if the president has been exposed to or has some experience of how the university functions “from below” as well as from the top, and has seen how the staff,

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<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*

faculty, students and other members of the university community interact from a number of different perspectives. Having that kind of experience makes a president less likely to approach the stewardship of a university based on what he or she has learned from management manuals but instead, from real encounters with real issues, real people and real problems that can then be built on in a larger context.

My “management education” began at Stanford when, in addition to receiving partial scholarship funds, as did many other students, I had a number of part-time jobs. I worked in the library and at the international student center, and was also a ticket-taker at the theater, a teaching assistant grading papers, and a program assistant, all jobs that gave me a good grounding in how the university worked at its most basic levels. One job I remember in particular was a stint at Stanford's famous Cellar, the only nonresidential dining room open to students, faculty and visitors. There, I learned that in America, working for one's education was not shameful; indeed, it was a badge of honor. What kind of job you had didn't matter—the fact that you were working for your education and striving to reach a goal was what counted. Working meant that you were self-reliant, and had self-respect. The jobs were only a means to an important end, and everyone understood that. People even bragged about their jobs, no matter how menial they were or how low on the social scale. Even middle-class students worked, and were proud of that fact.

However, this was a phenomenon that foreign students didn't understand. Most came from societies where there were rigid hierarchies of work, and caste, and hence, the nature of the work one did had class connotations. Low-level employment reflected poorly on one's standing in society. Indeed, I knew

foreign students who had to work to make ends meet but would rather be inside a kitchen washing dishes than work outside, waiting tables (arguably, a better job), because as a waiter or waitress they would be seen by others. Their fear was that word would get back to friends and family in their home country who would learn that they were employed as waiters while they went to college, and that would be an embarrassment. In other words, students new to the U.S.—including myself, I must confess—thought that one of the worst things that could happen would be for someone back home to think, “How come he went all the way to the United States just to work as a lowly waiter?” As we students became acculturated, we overcame these preconceptions.

In that connection, one of the most rewarding experiences I had was when Ayub Khan, then president of Pakistan,<sup>108</sup> visited Stanford. He addressed the issue of working to help pay for one’s education by noting that it would be revolutionary if students from the Indian subcontinent who arrived at the Stanford railway station unloaded and carried their own bags instead of waiting for porters to do the job, as would have been the case in their own countries where class and caste dictated that “menial work” such as carrying bags could only be done by those on the lowest economic rungs of society.

In later years, whether I was at San Francisco State College or the University of Texas or the University of Pennsylvania or Brown, these experiences gave me a deeper appreciation and respect for students and what they often had to go through in order to earn their education. Indeed, while at Brown, I drew on the phenomenon of Catholic “worker priests” that prevailed in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly

<sup>108</sup> Ayub Khan was president of Pakistan from 1958 to 1969.

in France,<sup>109</sup> and called our students, “worker students.” At formal Brown honorary degree dinners and other occasions where students worked as waiters, I always made a point of introducing them to the guests, saying, “Here are our wonderful student workers who are working to help pay for their education.”

Looking back again to *my* student worker days prompts me to reiterate how important those experiences were, because they help one realize that it’s not just the superstructure of a particular institution or organization that makes it successful but also the quality and reliability of its infrastructure, down to the seemingly smallest detail. In every position I have held at a university, it was immeasurably valuable to me to get to know everyone I could who was a part of the university community, from the workers to the students, to the faculty, to union representatives, to the librarians, the lab workers, the groundskeepers and the administrative personnel.

Perhaps the most underrated people in the university are the staff, especially secretaries, assistants and administrators who have witnessed the comings and goings of many deans, provosts and presidents. They serve as the central nervous system of the university’s administration and are often, themselves, a critical element of management, providing continuity as well as the efficiency that comes with understanding that can only be gained over time of how an organization functions. Many in the university community perhaps look upon these staff members as just cogs in the bigger wheel of the bureaucracy and don’t understand that their work and their attention to an issue can actually stoke the engines of change. A successful university president *does* understand

<sup>109</sup> “In 1944 the first worker-priest missions were set up in Paris, and then in Lyons and Marseille [to share] the grime and toil of an often oppressed social class...” *Uniya Newsletter*: Autumn 1995.

this about the structure of his or her institution and sees it not as hierarchical but horizontal, and takes care to deal with everyone in every position with the respect they deserve. There should never be first-, second- or third-class citizens at a university.

With this philosophy in mind, I was usually able to take the pulse of the university. At the University of Pennsylvania and later, at Brown, I became better able to anticipate when problems were looming on the horizon and diffuse impending problems and tensions that might be building in the community. Such efforts pay off when a president learns to steer everyone toward acceptance of each other and of the common educational mission that is shared by faculty, students and administrators alike.

The above observations come with a warning, however: what a president must *not* do is feign interest in an issue or a person. People can often tell when someone is genuinely interested in them or their cause or their work, and they can tell when that is not the case. If you're faking, they are likely to cut you right down to size, or retreat into a cocoon of cynicism. Under these circumstances, they would interpret overtures on the part of the administration as an attempt to manipulate them into doing or saying something, or as a sign of misguided noblesse oblige.

I am glad to see that these ideas have gradually been incorporated into "management theory," whereby it is considered critical for a leader to spend time getting to know and understand his or her workforce as well as the inner workings of the institution or organization they all serve. While this may seem to be a time-consuming pursuit, and dealing with the issues and problems that will turn up as a result may appear to present distractions, in

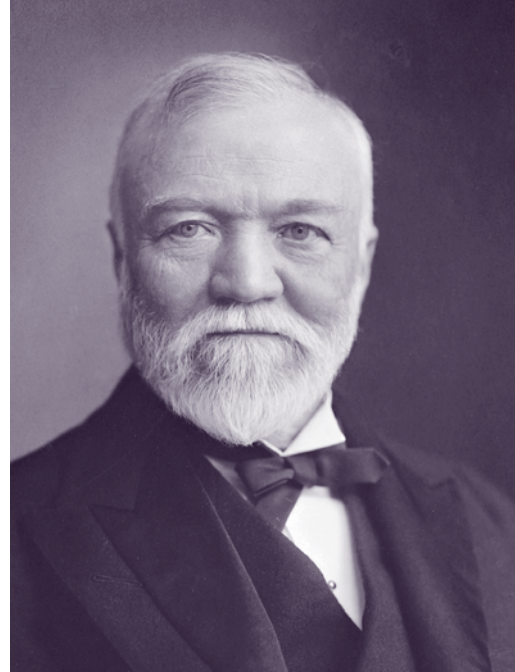
the long run, being on good terms with all the workers at an institution keeps the higher-up managers alert and on their toes, because they realize that they are not the only conduits to a president who has all sorts of other avenues for getting information and hearing opinions.

In essence, these observations all circle back to the notion that university presidents cannot treat different segments of the community in different ways, because that creates widely varying expectations on the part of different groups and individuals as well as actual or perceived divisions. Of course, this is more easily said than done, especially during labor strikes, which test all management theories and challenge the nervous system of all parties involved. At such times, the president of the university has to remember that strikes, no matter how bitter, and no matter what kind of difficulties they create, are always temporary and that they are, and will continue to be, part of the life of the university. Therefore, it is important to remember that post-strike relations can often be traced back to how people behaved while the strike was in progress and how effectively the lines of communication were kept open. At the conclusion of a strike, it may be tempting for a president to report to the Trustees and the university community at large that the administration has "declared victory" and "defeated" the union, but that's a temptation to be resisted. Strike leaders should not be denigrated nor should those who followed their union leaders be admonished for doing so. One has to remember that these situations are always a zero-sum game: if your opponents feel that they've lost everything, and on top of that are the victims of a lot of hurtful rhetoric and ad hominem remarks, they won't forget it the next time problems arise. In fact, there is much to be said for civility and face-saving, not only in terms of institutional relationships

but in national and international relations, as well. It is important not to alienate those with whom you are in an oppositional relationship because out of alienation and humiliation can come desperate acts, often with consequences that cannot be undone.

I consider myself lucky in that when the time came for me to leave an institution, I had followed my own advice and did not leave behind any “defeated enemies.” That had a lot to do with my cultural background: I was always aware that face-saving was important, and that it was important to allow people who had lost power in one way or another to retain their dignity and self-respect. A person who may have lost a position of power or influence is most likely to remain in the community and you will continue to interact with that man or woman for as long as you remain a member of the community yourself. So I always made it a practice to do my best to understand what line I should not cross so that anyone in that position could retreat, without my seeming to relish their defeat.

When I left the University of Pennsylvania, and later, when I left The New York Public Library and Brown University, my measure of success was not only whether or not I had faculty and/or staff support, but also (in the case of the universities) that I also had the support and respect of students and workers who had fought “pitched battles” with me. After all, we shared the same commitment to our institution, were part of one family—whether at The New York Public Library, the University of Pennsylvania or Brown—and understood that our disagreements were part of the democratic governance process. In the end, we were all passengers on the same ship, and the fact that the ship would be able to sail on, stronger than before no matter what the resolution of our problems, was what really mattered.




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## Philanthropy

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I was president of Brown University for nine years, at which point I once again took an inventory. The university had just successfully concluded the *Campaign for the Rising Generation*, a historic milestone for Brown and for Rhode Island in terms of fundraising. In addition, the university’s endowment, despite 5½ percent annual withdrawals, had almost trebled during the nine years, passing \$1 billion for the first time. More than 15,000 students a year were applying for admission to Brown, the largest number of applications ever received by the university.<sup>110</sup> As far as the university’s infrastructure was concerned, several new buildings

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<sup>110</sup> There were numerous other signs of success such as *U.S. News and World Report* ranking Brown 8<sup>th</sup> on its annual best colleges list (up from 9<sup>th</sup> in 1995). We had increased the number of women and minorities in faculty positions: of approximately 750 medical and non-medical faculty, about 100 were now members of minority groups and 217 were women. Ninety-seven percent of the goals set out in a 1992 report entitled *Looking Toward the Year 2000: A Status Report on the Long-Term Planning Process at Brown University*, which provided a blueprint for the university’s financial and academic planning, had been met.

had gone up, a new dormitory had been built, the campus was wired for the Internet, and numerous other long-overdue improvements had been made, including upgrading the libraries. Plans and fundraising for other new facilities had also been completed. With all this in mind, I concluded that it was time to move on. But I had to be sure where I was going next.

It was my great fortune that, in 1997, the Board of Carnegie Corporation of New York offered me the opportunity to be the Corporation's twelfth president. It was an exciting possibility, but any notion of succeeding to a post once held by Andrew Carnegie<sup>111</sup> was daunting, as well. I did not overlook the irony that, after him, I would be only the second immigrant to head this august institution. I did have something else in common with Andrew Carnegie: as children, we both loved books but because of our poor circumstances, were mostly unable to get them. We also shared a love of libraries and of education.

Becoming president of the Corporation also meant that one was being given the substantial task of building on the record of outstanding leaders who had previously served as president of Carnegie Corporation such as John Gardner, Alan Pifer and David Hamburg. And it meant serving the mission that Andrew Carnegie gave the Corporation, which is "to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding." This was an enormous responsibility, but one I looked forward to because it gave me the opportunity to act as an instrument of Carnegie's legacy and to attempt to meet his expectations that his wealth be used for the public good.

In short, joining Carnegie Corporation presented an extraordinary challenge. When I was

at The New York Public Library, I had often pointed to Andrew Carnegie as the guardian angel of libraries and learning, and here I was, metaphorically about to step into his shoes. To top that, the Corporation also happened to be in New York City, which I loved, and where I had spent some nine years. Unless you have lived in and then left New York City, you do not realize what you will be missing. I was delighted to return to a place that was also home to so many great institutions: the UN, some of America's most important colleges and universities, great museums, theaters, corporations, and centers of civic activity. Plus, New York is the natural habitat of the world's diasporas: people from all over the globe settle here and almost everyone is eventually integrated into the life of this remarkable, invigorating, beautiful, impossible city.

As I had led institutions that were dependent on philanthropy, it was intriguing to enter the field "from the other side," especially at a time when interest in philanthropy was blossoming. The challenge of philanthropy is how to contribute to the public good while at the same time assist both the American public and policymakers in understanding the power of philanthropy to effect positive change both in our nation and abroad.

For more than twenty years, like many of my colleagues in higher education, as well as at other nonprofit institutions, I had been a frequent mendicant in the corridors of philanthropy. Indeed, sometimes in different capacities, as dean, provost and later, president, I had come to appreciate the depth, breadth and scope of American philanthropy. I had been privileged to witness the operations of the Vincent Astor Foundation and was a Board member of the Aaron Diamond and Bill & Melinda Gates foundations, the J. Paul Getty Trust, and an advisor to the Annenberg Foundation. In fact, in writing this essay, I realized that,

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<sup>111</sup> Andrew Carnegie was president of Carnegie Corporation of New York 1911-1919.

through the years, I had served on the Boards of over three dozen different nonprofit organizations and institutions. These experiences had led me to an understanding of some of the mechanics of grantmaking. I also understood how potential grant recipients translate their ideas into funding proposals and how grant-making decisions are made on the donor side. Extensive reading about U.S. democracy, particularly such a seminal work as *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville, had given me a historical basis for understanding the unique characteristics of Americans, their altruism, and philanthropic impulses. By coincidence, one of the last courses I taught at Brown, which I co-taught with Stephen Graubard, a noted author who for more than 30 years was the editor of *Daedalus*, was about Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Rereading Tocqueville's description of the American character, I realized that it fit perfectly with the character of Andrew Carnegie, the immigrant, businessman and philanthropist. Carnegie's name was one of a handful of names that I had encountered in Tabriz, Iran, when, as a youngster, I read about the lives of self-made men—not only those who had become rich, but also writers, inventors, and others—from Robert Fulton to Andrew Carnegie. As president of The New York Public Library, where I had inherited Andrew Carnegie's legacy of "Carnegie libraries,"<sup>112</sup> it was natural for me to read Carnegie's famous 1889 essay, *The Gospel of Wealth*, in which he asserted that all personal wealth beyond that required to meet the needs of one's family should be regarded as a trust fund to be administered for the benefit of society.

Throughout my professional career, I had believed, practiced and preached that anyone who joins an institution, especially presidents,

<sup>112</sup> Andrew Carnegie funded the construction of 39 branch libraries in Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island. There are still 31 of them in operation today.

should do everything possible to learn about their institution's history, mission, complexities, accomplishments, reach—and limitations. I had read extensively about the University of Pennsylvania, The New York Public Library, and Brown University, so, as a prelude to joining Carnegie Corporation of New York, I extended my readings to include not only Andrew Carnegie himself, but also the mission, work and history of the Corporation. I learned everything I could. I read about my immediate predecessor, David Hamburg, who had already demonstrated to me that Carnegie Corporation was not a rigid, inflexible organization: although the Corporation did not have a formal program focused on support of libraries in the United States, when Dr. Hamburg was president of the Corporation, he made an exception and gave The New York Public Library a \$500,000 grant towards its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fund. The Ford Foundation, I learned—through its distinguished president and a great friend, Frank Thomas—also made such exceptions in exceptional situations.<sup>113</sup>

In general, the whole concept of philanthropy, and of American philanthropy in particular, interested me deeply. It was a revelation to me, and I'm sure to many others, that people would voluntarily part from their fortunes to give to a cause, not out of pity or charity, but out of a belief in that cause. The concept that these individuals were contributing to *building* something rather than just providing for immediate charitable needs was compelling, as was the fact that some people in control of great wealth would put societal well-being on a par with their devotion to providing for their

<sup>113</sup> Though the Ford Foundation does not have a program devoted to supporting libraries, they did provide significant funding to The New York Public Library. Frank Thomas, who was the president of Ford at that time, jokingly told me that rules are important but so are exceptions, and Andrew Carnegie's legacy was always an exception.

own children or grandchildren. This brings to mind an important distinction between charity and philanthropy that has eroded over time, but should be noted because it highlights the different concerns that donors may have: charity, which is derived from the Latin word *caritas*, meaning dear, has a long religious history; for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, for example, it has meant giving immediate relief to human suffering without passing judgment on those who suffer. Philanthropy has a more secular history and comes from the Greek word *philanthropos*, meaning love of mankind. The Greek meaning carried over to English and, for the longest time, philanthropy referred only to a caring disposition toward one's fellow man. Now the word is used to describe generosity that promotes human progress in any field.

Being a historian carries its own particular burden: in my case, I could not help but be mindful of the fact that I was assuming the presidency not only as an administrator but also as a steward of Andrew Carnegie's trust, and therefore, that I had a historical and moral, not to mention fiduciary, duty to do justice to Carnegie's vision and legacy. After all, this was a man who had even entered into a prenuptial agreement with his wife-to-be that declared their joint intentions to devote the bulk of his wealth to the public good.<sup>114</sup>

As a historian, I was also aware of the many issues that may arise during times of transition in leadership. One must always be aware of how important transitions are and cognizant of how much work they require. Transitions have to be smooth. They have to be planned. They have to be orchestrated—not simply for the sake of the departing or incoming individual, but for the health of the institution involved. During

a time of transition, institutional leadership must take care to see that the public's perception of their institution is not diminished, that it does not seem rattled by change or judged to be floundering in any way. The institution must always be seen to be on the ascendancy; its momentum must not be slowed or checked. Its built-in energy must be tapped to keep it moving forward without hesitancy or doubt. The emphasis must always be on continuities rather than discontinuities, on traditions as well as how to accommodate change.

Nonetheless, installing a new president is, by necessity, always going to be accompanied by a period of adjustment for the institution and its staff. Such transitions, however, can also provide the opportunity for reflection, self-analysis, and renewal because one necessarily takes stock of personal and institutional strengths and weaknesses that will lead to success or, if unrecognized, prove to be stumbling blocks. For my part, as the new president of the Corporation, I was aware that there were pluses and minuses to be tallied. On the positive side, my years at several major American universities had certainly familiarized me with the workings of institutions like Carnegie Corporation that were focused on research and education and other national and international challenges. After all, by their very nature, the educational mission of universities incorporates a focus on the major issues confronting our nation and the world. The Corporation's mandate to help create and disseminate knowledge was a direct parallel to the mission of universities; both met universal needs.

The minuses included the fact that I knew little about the inner workings of a foundation and its staff, the process of decision making at a foundation and setting of priorities. I had no firsthand knowledge of the difficulties involved in what Andrew Carnegie had termed

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<sup>114</sup> Carnegie and his intended bride, Louise Whitfield, signed the document on April 22, 1887, the same day that the Carnegies were married.

“scientific philanthropy,” namely that money is not simply given away; monies are invested in ideas, institutions, organizations, programs and individuals with vision and strong leadership, and with strategic plans in place. But I was as eager to learn as much as I could and so it was, therefore, with both joy and trepidation that I took up my new position, which came with the legacy built on the work of my predecessors.

### **Carnegie Corporation of New York**

As I studied the work and history of the foundation, I began to assess its resources and personnel, not to mention its programmatic priorities, both past and present. In the process, I worked out some basic questions about the Corporation that were in keeping with the kinds of questions I have always asked about institutions I have led, such as, *What are we doing? Why are we doing what we’re doing? How do we know that what we’re doing, we’re doing well? Who else does what we do, but does it better?*

There are two ways to get answers to such questions. First, rely on consultants to help find answers. Second, devote the time necessary to gathering the information firsthand. I chose to follow the second course, engaging in in-depth conversations with a multitude of scholars, diplomats, university presidents and educators, heads of nonprofit organizations, other foundation leaders, policymakers, present and former Corporation grantees, and many other individuals. In due time, I also interviewed every member of the Corporation’s staff. My intent was to gain some real understanding of their experiences at the Corporation and their vision of what our mission entailed in order to acquire as much knowledge as I could about the foundation’s work, its grantees and its partners. Furthermore, it was important to avoid discontinuity with work that had already taken place and to maintain continuity. Of particular

importance, naturally, were my meetings with my immediate predecessors, David Hamburg<sup>115</sup> and Alan Pifer.<sup>116</sup>

To mark the symbolic continuity of the Corporation’s presidential administrations, my first task was to help launch the final report of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict,<sup>117</sup> the culmination of three years’ work by Dr. Hamburg. He had chaired the Commission, along with Cyrus Vance, and their efforts were aided by a number of other distinguished national and international commissioners and scholars. The Corporation had established the Commission in 1994 to address “the looming threats to world peace of intergroup violence and to advance new ideas for the prevention and resolution of deadly conflict.” During the course of its work the Commission produced more than forty scholarly and policy relevant publications covering an astonishing range of issues.<sup>118</sup>

To aid in the transition between administrations, I sought the pro bono services of McKinsey & Company, which had helped me both at the Library and at Brown, to carry out an in-depth study of the organization and structure of Carnegie Corporation and to provide an assessment of the foundation’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as its potential. One thing that soon became clear in studying Carnegie Corporation’s evolution and its current standing was that while, in the past, the Corporation used to be one of the wealthiest foundations in the United States in terms

115 Dr. David Hamburg was president of Carnegie Corporation of New York from 1982 to 1997.

116 Alan Pifer was acting president of Carnegie Corporation of New York from 1965 to 1967; he served as president from 1967 to 1982.

117 *Preventing Deadly Conflict*, Final Report (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1997).

118 Although the Commission ceased operations in December 1999, its publications remain available online at [www.ccpdc.org](http://www.ccpdc.org).

of endowment, that was no longer the case.<sup>119</sup> Today, the Corporation's reputation far exceeds its resources. The same can be said of the Rockefeller Foundation, which was founded in 1913 and is committed to "fostering knowledge and innovation to enrich and sustain the lives and livelihood of poor and excluded people throughout the world."<sup>120</sup>

In its nearly one hundred years of grant-making, the Corporation's focus has been on advancing education and knowledge and on international peace, but by necessity, it has also worked in related areas. Andrew Carnegie mandated that the Corporation should benefit the people of the United States, although up to 7.4 percent of the funds could be used for the same purpose in countries that are or have been members of the British Dominions, subsequently, the Commonwealth. In recent years, the "Commonwealth" aspect of the Corporation's funding has focused on sub-Saharan Africa. Carnegie's charge to his foundation was also remarkable in that he did not intend to hold the future hostage to the past, declaring that since, "Conditions upon the earth [sic] inevitably change; hence, no wise man will bind Trustees forever to certain paths, causes or institutions...I give my Trustees full authority to change policy or causes hitherto aided, from time to time, when this, in their opinion, has become necessary or desirable. They shall best conform to my wishes by using their own judgment..." Carnegie's prescient and generous intentions have allowed the Corporation to have an impact in a wide range of areas.

Andrew Carnegie left behind a fascinating history. First and foremost, Carnegie's name is synonymous with libraries. Beginning in 1886,

Carnegie, and later Carnegie Corporation, in its early years, collectively spent \$56 million to create 1,681 public libraries in nearly as many U.S. communities and 828 libraries in other parts of the world.<sup>121</sup>

But more than that, Andrew Carnegie's personal philanthropy was remarkably wide-ranging. He founded more than 20 different institutions and organizations in the United States and elsewhere, devoted to advancing causes such as international peace, ethics in international affairs, and scientific research as well as to improving teaching and education, supporting Scottish universities, and recognizing heroism. He created Carnegie Hall and funded the establishment of the Peace Palace in The Hague.<sup>122</sup> Perhaps less well known than his dedication to building libraries for the general public was his dedication to the cause of international peace and the prevention of deadly conflict. In Carnegie's view, capitalism provided no moral justification for war. *Reason* was the source men and women should look to in order to find solutions for conflict, and *competition* was the best substitute for going to war. As a rationalist, he believed in these principles; as a philanthropist, he thought he could act on them.

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121 For the past quarter century, the Corporation has not had a program of support for domestic libraries, with the exception of a few grants for specific purposes. The foundation's recent library-related efforts have focused on sub-Saharan Africa with the goal of developing national libraries, revitalizing selected public libraries and aiding development of university libraries in countries and institutions that have strategic intervention programs funded by the Corporation.

122 The institutions founded by Andrew Carnegie include Carnegie Hall, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, The Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, Carnegie Institution of Washington, the Carnegie Foundation (Netherlands), The Carnegie Dunfermline Trust, The Carnegie Hero Fund Commission (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), The Carnegie Hero Fund Trust (Dunfermline, Scotland), various Carnegie Hero Funds in Europe, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs.

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119 As of 2004, Carnegie Corporation of New York was ranked 24<sup>th</sup>, by assets, among U.S. foundations according to *Foundation Yearbook* 2006, published by The Foundation Center.

120 <http://www.rockfound.org/>.

Carnegie became a tireless promoter of ways to further the cause of peace. In a 1907 speech, ultimately translated into 13 languages, he argued that war might be eliminated if a global organization, which he later proposed calling a “league of nations,” was established with authority to settle international disputes through arbitration and the use of economic sanctions. After World War I, President Woodrow Wilson’s proposal for the League of Nations had much in common with Carnegie’s ideas, as did subsequent proposals for the United Nations. It is therefore no surprise that Andrew Carnegie’s interest in the pursuit of peace has informed the Corporation’s work throughout the past century and into the present day. For example, since the advent of the Cold War, and now in the post-Soviet era, the Corporation has maintained a focus on efforts to reduce the proliferation of nuclear and biological weapons. The relationship between the United States and Russia is a current concern, now further complicated by the emerging importance of post-Soviet Eurasia and the threat to global stability of states at risk. Similar concerns led the Corporation to create its Scholars Program in 1999 to give individual scholars the ability to explore their vision of issues relating to the Corporation’s work, including international peace and security, with a current focus on Islam. It is our hope that Carnegie Scholars will increase our understanding of the fact that Islam is not a monolithic religion but one that is nuanced in how it is practiced and interpreted, and that scholarship can also help bring about a deeper understanding of how Islam has influenced—and has been affected by—the current process of globalization.

Over the decades, the work that Andrew Carnegie began has led to landmark efforts that continue to influence the progress of society. Let me sketch some of them for you: in 1917, with capital and initial subsidies from the

Corporation,<sup>123</sup> Andrew Carnegie established the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America (TIAA). The story of how TIAA originated is actually one that points out the extraordinary effect that Andrew Carnegie’s philanthropy has had on the quality of American higher education. While serving as a Trustee at Cornell University, Carnegie was shocked to discover that teachers, “one of the highest professions,” in his words, earned less than his clerks and lacked retirement benefits. In 1905, he established the Carnegie Teachers Pension Fund—which later received a national charter by Act of Congress and became The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching<sup>124</sup>—with a \$10 million endowment to provide free pensions to college and university teachers. But there were strings attached, and one requirement was that participating institutions had to have the highest academic admission standards of the day. As a result, colleges and universities across the nation raised their academic standards in order to join the pension system. Carnegie’s biographer, Joseph Frazier Wall wrote, “With his pension plan, [he] had done more in a year to advance the standards of higher education within the United States than probably any carefully conceived program to accomplish that goal could ever have done.” However, Carnegie eventually realized that even his personal wealth could not support the pension system’s growth. Therefore, through Carnegie Corporation of New York, he made a \$1 million gift to establish TIAA.<sup>125</sup> The

123 [Carnegie Corporation of New York] *Reports of Officers for the Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 1946*.

124 For much of their history, Carnegie Corporation of New York and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (CFAT) shared their officers and Board members. CFAT was reorganized under a separate president and Board in 1979.

125 According to *Andrew Carnegie*, by Joseph Frazier Wall (Oxford University Press, 1970; University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980): the stock of TIAA “was owned by the Carnegie Corporation until 1938, at which time it was transferred to the Trustees of TIAA, making it a totally independent nonprofit insurance company.”

association managed the retirement accounts that were jointly funded by teachers and their employers. In his recent book, *The Foundation: A Great American Secret*,<sup>126</sup> Joel L. Fleishman, the former president of the Atlantic Philanthropies, notes that, “Today, we can recognize the instinctive genius that lay behind Carnegie’s scheme [to create TIAA]. At the time, it was not so obvious. Frederick T. Gates, the philanthropic advisor to John D. Rockefeller, Sr. remarked, ‘Carnegie is putting his ten millions into a pension fund for teachers. I think this an extraordinary act of folly. Of all people, teachers should be an example of thrift.’”<sup>127</sup>

Now called TIAA-CREF, it is one of the world’s largest insurance companies, with over \$300 billion in assets. Raising the standards of excellence for America’s institutions of higher education exemplifies how the Corporation’s funding acted as a lever of social change, since inherent in the creation of TIAA was the idea that Americans were entitled to a secure income in their retirement, a concept that has been carried through in the creation of the Social Security system.

In the decade following the initial funding of TIAA (specifically, between 1920 and 1924), the Carnegie Americanization Study<sup>128</sup> was published by Harper & Brothers Publishers.<sup>129</sup> The ten-volume study grew out of the Corporation’s concern with understanding

the role of Carnegie libraries involved in social work with immigrants.<sup>130</sup> It is not surprising, then, to note that today, in the midst of raging debate about acculturation and assimilation both in the United States and Europe, the Corporation continues to be focused on immigrant civic integration through its Strengthening U.S. Democracy Program.

Reading through the Corporation’s history is like being an archeologist who keeps finding more and more fascinating episodes that demonstrate how Andrew Carnegie’s philanthropy made a real difference in a surprising variety of realms. For instance, in 1923, the Nobel Prize in Medicine for the discovery of insulin was awarded to Drs. Frederick Banting and J.J.R. Macleod, who conducted their groundbreaking experiments in a Corporation-funded laboratory at the University of Toronto. A decade later, in the 1930s, the Corporation enlisted Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal to undertake a study of the “The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy.” The resulting book, *An American Dilemma*, was published in 1944 and is still cited as a groundbreaking report on race relations in the U.S., one that raised the nation’s consciousness about its race problem and was noted in the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to prohibit segregation in the nation’s public schools. In the 1940s, Corporation funding helped to create the Educational Testing Service (ETS), a nonprofit organization aiming to “advance quality and equity in education by providing fair and valid student assessments.” In 1956, the Corporation created the Foundation Center to support and improve philanthropy by promoting public understanding of the field and helping grantseekers to succeed.

126 (Public Affairs, 2007).

127 As noted in *The Foundation: A Great American Secret*—Source: Howard Berliner, *A System of Science for Medicine* (New York and London: Tavistock, 1985). 31-32.

128 See also page 94.

129 The full list of the Americanization Studies publications: Thompson, Frank V., *Schooling of the Immigrant*; Park, Robert Ezra, *The Immigrant Press and its Control*; Gavit, John Palmer, *Americans by Choice*; Claghorn, Kate Holladay, *The Immigrant’s Day in Court*; Thomas, William Isaac (together with Robert E. Park and Herbert A. Miller), *Old World Traits Transplanted*; Leiserson, William M., *Adjusting Immigrant and Industry*; Frank V. Thompson, *Schooling of the Immigrant*; Speck, Peter A., *A Stake in the Land*; Breckinridge, S.P., *New Homes for Old*; and Daniels, John, *America via the Neighborhood*.

130 Jane Gorjevsky. “Documenting Russian and Eastern European Immigrant Culture in American Manuscript Repositories: Private Philanthropy Archives.” Cited from manuscript to be published in *Slavic & East European Information Resources*, Vol. 7, issues 2/3.

In the 1960s, the Corporation began an era of working, in part, through commissions and task forces. One example is the creation, in 1964, of the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, which studied the role of noncommercial educational television in society. In 1967, the Commission published a celebrated report, *Public Television: A Program for Action*; its recommendations were adopted in the Public Broadcasting Act, which created the public broadcasting system. Another such entity—the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education—was established in 1967 under the leadership of Clark Kerr. Financed by the Corporation and sponsored by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, it produced over 150 seminal reports and books and led to the formation of the Federal Pell Grants program, which has awarded more than \$100 billion in grants to an estimated 30 million postsecondary students.

In 1965, Head Start was founded as a result of, among other factors, the Corporation's multi-year support of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation's work on early childhood cognitive development. Also in the 1960s, Carnegie Corporation support contributed to the creation of *Sesame Street* and the Children's Television Workshop, ushering in an era of quality educational television for youngsters.

In the 1970s, after a long hiatus, the Corporation returned to grantmaking in South Africa, supporting the formation of "public interest law" projects that challenged apartheid policies in the courts. In the 1980s, the Corporation initiated a major study of poverty in South Africa, which was known as "the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa." The first study, issued in 1932 and known as the "Carnegie Poor White Study," had been intended to document

the plight of poverty-stricken Afrikaners, but had the unfortunate and completely unintended effect of being used, in later years, to help justify apartheid. The new poverty commission was a way to close the books on the original study and create a document that revealed what life under apartheid really meant. Despite a hostile reception from the ruling National Party, the findings of the report were disseminated widely throughout the South African press and internationally. Francis Wilson, a respected economist at the University of Cape Town and director of the South Africa Labour and Development Research Unit at the university who also coordinated the poverty commission, said, "The report<sup>131</sup> helped to inform the policymakers of the 1990s. Many people involved in the inquiry went on to assume leadership positions in the current government. It created a climate of informed opinion about poverty in South Africa and when the African National Congress came to power, they made the point that eradication of poverty was part of their agenda."

More recently, in the 1990s, the Corporation created The Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children. Its 1994 report, *Starting Points*, was hailed as critical to raising the national consciousness about the need to focus on the healthy development of children—and support for their families—during the first three years of life. The aforementioned Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict also did its work in this decade as did the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, which, with support from the Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation, published *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, a 1996 re-

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131 *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge* (W.W. Norton, 1989).

port that provided a framework and agenda for teacher education reform across the country.

On occasion, the Corporation has been asked to administer grants on behalf of a benefactor or two. For example, since 2001, we have been able to grant a total of \$85 million to small- and medium-sized, New York City-based arts, cultural and social service organizations because of the generosity of an anonymous donor who has chosen the Corporation to make the grants on the donor's behalf.

As can be imagined, the efforts outlined above are only a fragment of the thousands of projects, programs and initiatives in which the Corporation, with its long and distinguished history, has played an instrumental role. Naturally, anyone joining the Corporation would bask in the light of its accomplishments and want to dwell on its record of achievement. For me, however, while proud of the foundation's successes, I also wanted to understand where it might have weaknesses, and in retrospect, to be clear about which grants really had been successful and which had not.

I was surprised to learn how many foundations, organizations, institutions and individuals wanted—and still do want—to be affiliated with the Corporation and how many different sectors of our society expected something from Carnegie Corporation. Because of the foundation's nearly century-long record of innovative and forward-thinking work and its genuine interest in the progress and advancement of its grantees, the Corporation was continually being asked to fund model projects, seek solutions to innumerable problems, carry out research, provide guidance and in general, do just about anything that needed doing. The temptation to try to lead in many different fields was strong, but we knew we should do so only in those areas in which we had the requi-

site strengths and expertise. Before I even officially joined the Corporation, I thought long and hard about how to focus the foundation's resources most effectively.

In transitions involving institutional leadership, the central point is always how to manage expectations about a new administration and what it will do—or not do. Where is the balance among those expectations, available resources, and any outstanding long- or short-term commitments? A foundation, even with a reasonable endowment, simply cannot address just any problem that falls within the scope of its mission. It is important not to over-promise or to dare flying without ensuring a safe landing. It is equally important to realize very early on that a foundation is primarily a source of funding in a given field and it should not be confused with—or confuse itself with—its grantees. The grantees are the real agents of change, and a foundation must empower *them* without usurping *their* missions, accomplishments, and identity. Perhaps most important of all, foundation leaders have to come to grips with the fact that their institution cannot do everything, that there are other more-than-capable foundations and organizations that can step in when necessary. This should not be a cause for dismay because working cooperatively with other foundations and organizations with complementary agendas always engenders greater benefits and provides greater impact. In addition, cooperation also helps to build networks and promotes action. From my point of view, if you are dedicated to every good cause, then in essence, you are for none. Total commitment to all good causes equates with total apathy because it leaves no room for action. Thus, setting priorities and honing one's focus are essential in order to achieve measurable results.

Other issues occupying my thoughts included setting a course that would be supportive of vital programs and projects but at the same time allow for bucking trends; that would encourage a diversity of approaches and airing of competing views about solutions to problems while also promoting independent thinking. Solid scholarship and objective evaluation must inform such efforts in order to invest in projects that will stand the test of time.

Incoming presidents, especially those who come from struggling institutions, as I did, should be prepared for a culture shock when they move from the realms of academe or libraries, where scarcity is the norm and where the impact of every dollar counts, to the world of foundations, where it seems that money, for the most part, is not a problem. During my decades at Brown, The New York Public Library, and before that, at the University of Pennsylvania, a large percentage of my time was given over to fundraising necessitated by cultures of scarcity. The choices I could make were probably determined as much by frugality as by merit. This long-lived mindset traveled with me to the Corporation, where, until I recognized what was happening, it probably constituted an obstacle to making grants as expeditiously as possible.

When a president takes on a new organization and management structure and is steering a new course, naturally, each one will draw inspiration from different experiences and role models. My role model as a philanthropic leader was the late Jack Sawyer, who headed the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation from 1975 to 1987. Sawyer always made it clear that he was a steward of Mellon's resources, not their owner, and that his obligation was to uphold the foundation's traditions and standards and use its funds for the greatest impact and the greatest good. I remember being very im-

pressed by how, at the Mellon Foundation, you did not *apply* for a grant, you were *invited* to apply, a policy they still, by and large, follow today. I also distinctly remember how, when The New York Public Library received a large and generous grant from the Mellon Foundation, I said to Jack Sawyer that I would do my best to ensure that the money was used as effectively as possible, and was impressed by his reply, which was that he knew I'd do a good job because if I didn't, I wouldn't be invited to ask the Mellon Foundation for any additional funding. Whether one received a grant from the Mellon Foundation or not, Jack Sawyer always treated people with respect. He tried to understand potential grantees' objectives and priorities. He did not pontificate. He was a good listener. And clearly, being a good listener is an important skill for foundation leaders as well as university heads, not to mention program officers and deans.

### Some Preliminary Thoughts

I am not a great fan of the philosopher Michel Foucault, but one of his sayings has always stuck in my mind. At first, I thought it was merely clever verbal gymnastics, but the time came when I realized that it was, in fact, substantive—namely, “People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does.”<sup>132</sup> With that idea to spur me on, I wrote my first essay for the Corporation's 1997 annual report—a tradition for Carnegie Corporation presidents—and called it *Some Preliminary Thoughts*. The essay was based on the gist of Foucault's questions, which I applied to the work and mission of Carnegie Corporation, such as: “Does the Corporation perceive itself as an incubator of ideas or as a sustainer

132 *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, by Hubert L. Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow (University of Chicago Press, second edition, 1983).

of institutions that play that role? How do we combat the age-old problem of scatteration in our grantmaking, while retaining the flexibility to respond to a tantalizing idea or a target of opportunity?" I also wondered, "What are some important new issues facing our nation and the world that we should deal with? Where is our comparative leadership advantage? How do we achieve the right balance between continuity and change?" That last question was crucial, because I did not—and do not—believe we should engage in change for change's sake. As we considered initiatives, I believed that we would probably reaffirm the importance of some of the paths already taken, only adjusting the emphasis somewhat.

The fundamental reason that I wrote *Some Preliminary Thoughts* was to set out the general context of my agenda for the foundation, but also to try to make clear that I had come to Carnegie Corporation with an open mind, not a ready-made recipe for change. It was important to assure the staff that what changes would be made over time would be thoughtful and deliberate, and certainly not arbitrary. In fact, I could not act until I understood as much as I could about the foundation's work and its nearly century-long role in American society, in order to do justice to the legacy of Andrew Carnegie. Among the first steps I took was to meet, individually, with all the Corporation's program officers and also with a great many of its grantees. As in any transition, both the staff of the foundation and its grantees were going through a period of anxiety about what would happen under a new president. There were some concerns about my management philosophy and my priorities. Would I bring in a hierarchical, academic model? Notwithstanding my assurances, did I have a "secret plan" or vision to impose upon the foundation? Did I have a ready-made team to move to Carnegie Cor-

poration from the University of Pennsylvania, the Library or Brown? Similar questions were natural, both from the staff and from grantees.

There was particular anxiety among those individuals and organizations who, over the years, had been the beneficiaries of Corporation support. They were concerned about the change in administration because they worried they might have no way of effectively communicating with the new leadership, either individually or collectively. Beyond that, because I was an educator, they worried that I might not be aware of the political, scientific, economic, cultural, ecological, and ethnic challenges facing our society. To allay these anxieties, I followed much the same course as I had at The New York Public Library. That meant letting people know that I was indeed in the learning and education business, meaning also in the information and knowledge business. Many aspects of the world of philanthropy were not at all alien to me.

Still, I had many questions of my own. I did not know about all the "moving parts" of a foundation. How, for example, does one become a program officer at a foundation? Do you study a certain subject in school or need a degree in a certain field? Or do you join a foundation, perhaps in an administrative capacity and then eventually get the job of program officer or work up to the position in some other way? In my autobiography, *The Road to Home*, I wrote about Dorothy E. Soderlund, the program assistant in charge of the administration of the Ford Foundation's Training Research Fellowships in 1960 when I was nominated for a Ford Foreign Area Training Fellowship. Ms. Soderlund, who was extremely intelligent and efficient, did not have a college degree but was in charge of a major foundation program and did a superb job. Could I infer anything from the way foundations operated from that situation?

In general, I wondered, how *do* foundation presidents recruit personnel? Is the search only within the academy? Does it include the ranks of municipal or public agencies? Other foundations? What kind of experience or training do foundation personnel need to have? If not formal schooling in their field, then what kind of exposure would be most relevant or helpful? Do foundation program staff tend to be insular, protected from knowing all they need to know about a field by the very nature of their work, where grantseekers may put up with a foundation staff member's whims or even their ignorance because the grantseeker is in the position of a supplicant? In that connection, how does one avoid the foundation-grantee version of what President Dwight D. Eisenhower called the "military-industrial complex"? With its counterpart, the "philanthropy" version—the "grantor, grantee, and consultant complex"—the relationship can be colored by a culture of dependence, where grantees *expect* ongoing, long-term support and therefore, are averse to taking risks.

How does the president establish one or more new directions for the foundation? If a foundation's charter allows for some latitude as, for example, ours does, is one confined to fields in which foundation personnel are already experts or can new staff be recruited? Can existing program officers recast themselves as experts in new fields? Should program officers be specialists, or generalists who can manage any program area? Are they like Foreign Service officers who stay on and continue to do their work under different administrations, year after year? If new directions are indicated, and existing staff is not suited to the new work, what legal, moral and ethical obligations are there to them? What if new blood is need for "unclogging the arteries"? Some foundations had unchanging programs over many decades and

staff that had also been fixtures at the foundation for the same long periods of time. Others offered only short-term contracts to program officers so they always had the opportunity to replenish the ranks, if that was appropriate or necessary. Would either of these pathways, or some combination of the two, be best for Carnegie Corporation in the years ahead?

That wasn't all I wondered about. There was the issue of consultants, which many foundations—as well as other institutions—often rely on. How are decisions on their efficacy arrived at? How often should consultants be changed and new individuals or consulting organizations be brought into a project? I have always been cautious about the use of consultants; they are quick to take credit for success but scatter to the wind like dandelions gone to seed when problems loom on the horizon. As the adage says, "Success has many parents but failure is an orphan." I think an institution should not rely on the same individuals or organizations all the time because new ideas and fresh perspectives may not be forthcoming. Consultants do not always give independent judgments; they may simply try to justify what an institution is already doing. Their advice is often what they think institutional leaders want to hear, so that their services will be called upon again.

Many other questions intrigued me. How do foundations sort through and judge the value of the many ideas presented to the program staff? Some certainly stem from the foundation's ongoing projects and long-standing interests, but what is the process for evaluating those that come from other sources, by other routes? How does a foundation president keep abreast of trends and developments in society and in the wide variety of scientific, cultural, political and academic fields while at the same time coping with the day-to-day administrative

needs and demands of a foundation, its meetings, visitors, committees, budgets, personnel issues, etc.? I was reminded of the danger of losing touch with the world of knowledge, ideas and informed opinions by some who told me that, as the president of a foundation, all I'd hear from then on would be what people thought I wanted to hear. This would be true especially at the beginning of my tenure, because many would fear that jobs and grants were at risk. (Many grant recipients, of course, do not see it that way. At a university, if tenure or promotion were denied a faculty member, for example, you had earned an enemy for life. Foundation culture is more “salutary” than that: when those looking for support are turned down, they know there will be other days and other grant applications.)

When a professional cynic congratulated me on my appointment, he reminded me that, as a foundation president, I would never hear an honest sentence or even eat a bad meal. Another individual, a friend of mine who is also a foundation president, sent me a cactus as a gift with a note that said foundations are often intellectually barren places and I would therefore need to keep myself constantly “watered,” so I wouldn't become isolated from what was going on in the world or lose touch with ideas. The cactus was meant to remind me of that.

So it was with the cactus ensconced in my office that I set about working with the foundation's staff and officers to begin formulating our agenda for the months and years ahead.

## Next Steps

I earlier wrote that as far back as my years as dean and provost of the University of Pennsylvania, I thought it should be normal for institutions, to serve the public interest and for self-interest, as well, to cooperate, to complement each other and work together. Collaborating

in such areas as coordinating library acquisitions or the bulk purchasing of everyday items in order to save money or, at the other end of the spectrum, investing in sophisticated and expensive scientific equipment such as electron microscopes seemed to be common-sense propositions. In a similar vein, it seemed to make sense for foundations to collaborate in order to invest wisely, increase their impact, plan further ahead, and reduce the tendency of both staff and institutions themselves to operate in silos.

One of my first priorities at the Corporation became building alliances with other philanthropies—a strategy that built on the Corporation's history of forming alliances to support good causes. I thought that we should all be less interested in who, or which institution, got credit for a particular program or project than in advancing good ideas in whatever way would serve them best. Foundations with mutual program interests should not replicate each other's efforts because doing so is wasteful. Supporting a project just to be able to say “we are also involved” is equally improvident. I may have a particular aversion to that kind of inefficiency because of the lessons I've learned about institutional frugality. After all, I come from a culture that hates waste—that in fact, cannot afford it.

Upon my assumption of the presidency of the Corporation, I was gratified to find likeminded leaders at our sister foundations, such as Susan Berresford, president of the Ford Foundation; Jonathan Fanton, president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; Patty Stonesifer, chief executive officer of the Gates Foundation Gail Levin, executive director of the Annenberg Foundation; Aryeh Neier president of the Open Society Institute; Joel L. Fleishman, former president of the Atlantic Philanthropies and his successor, John

R. Healy; Hodding Carter, president of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, who was succeeded by Alberto Ibarguen; as well as Gordon Conway, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, and now his successor, Judith Rodin. Some examples of the Corporation's collaborative efforts include our support for higher education in Africa, where we formed a funding alliance with the Ford, Rockefeller and MacArthur foundations that is now called the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa. It has recently been joined by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, under the direction of its president Paul Brest, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, under the direction of president William G. Bowen (Don Michael Randel, former president of the University of Chicago, was recently named the new head of the Mellon Foundation), and the Kresge Foundation, under president Rip Rapson. Launched in 2000 as a five-year effort, in 2005 it was renewed for five more years. To date, the funding partners have contributed over \$150 million to strengthen African universities in Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and, more recently, Egypt and Madagascar. An additional \$200 million has been pledged by the Partnership, a mechanism by which the participating foundations provide both joint and individual support.

Our work on higher education in Russia is also supported by a partnership focused on a joint strategy of reinvigorating a post-Communist Russian university system that had, for the most part, abandoned regional intellectuals and scholars to the free-market uncertainties of modern life. In developing Centers For Advanced Study and Education (CASEs), which empowered universities to create academic hubs for scholars in the social sciences and the humanities and become vibrant intellectual communities for established and emerging

scholars, the Corporation has worked with both the MacArthur Foundation and the Russian Ministry of Education. (The Open Society Institute was also involved in the initial CASEs funding.) To date, nine CASEs have been established in Russia and four more in the post-Soviet states.

The Corporation's efforts to improve both teacher education and urban high schools are framed around collaborative efforts. Teachers for a New Era (TNE) was designed by the Corporation to strengthen K-12 teaching by developing state-of-the-art programs at schools of education. It is also being supported by the Ford and Annenberg foundations, while a comprehensive evaluation of the initiative is being undertaken with primary funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and additional support from the Ford and Nellie Mae Education foundations. Schools for a New Society, a Corporation initiative aimed at improving urban high schools—which has school district reform as its core component—was also supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In the area of improving journalism education, the Corporation partners with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation in the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education.

In another example of collaboration, an area that the Corporation's Board thought it was important to support was income inequality. We did not have the capacity to undertake the research and evaluation ourselves. Hence, in 2000, we made a grant of \$1,500,000 to the Russell Sage Foundation to analyze the implications of the widened income gap in the United States. Russell Sage was the most appropriate institution to take on this project as it is not only devoted solely to research in the social sciences, but also publishes research findings under its own imprint. The result of

our grants and Russell Sage's research efforts was a report, published in 2004, called *Social Inequality*, that presented the conclusions of forty-eight social scientists on how recent increases in economic inequality have exacerbated social inequities of the kind that might make the widening gap between rich and poor Americans difficult to reverse.

Naturally, we also collaborated among Carnegie's family of organizations. Since 2001, for example, the Corporation has worked with its sister Carnegie institutions<sup>133</sup> on launching and awarding the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy, which is given every two years to one or more individuals or families who, like Andrew Carnegie, have dedicated their private wealth to the public good and who have a sustained an impressive career in philanthropy. The Medal has also helped to fulfill the wish of the Carnegie organizations to work together for a common purpose, and to once again prove the maxim that charity does indeed begin at home. In that connection, it should be noted that over the years, the Corporation has made numerous grants to its sister Carnegie institutions for projects and programs that have intersected with our priorities. The Corporation, for example, has provided funding to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs; The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh; Carnegie-Mellon University; The Carnegie Institution of Washington and the Carnegie Foundation of the Netherlands/Peace Palace.

Establishing these partnerships was a rewarding experience, but in the meantime, the Corporation still had to deal with the crucial and difficult issues involving some of

the Corporation's long-standing relationships with a number of major nonprofit organizations. These had come to expect ongoing, general support from the Corporation. Many of them had built this expectation into their budgets. The impetus for this change was our decision to expand the diversity of our grant-making and base our work on a competition of *ideas* rather than of needs. This is a particularly important issue because my belief is that what foundations can and must do is invest in ideas and the projects that are enriched by them. Needs are constant, and foundations cannot satisfy the needs of individuals, groups, communities or even nations on a long-term basis—but what they *can* do is invest in ideas about how to cope with and meet those needs.

Therefore, at the Corporation, we began to bring to a close some of our ongoing general institutional support, which had included the funding of a number of well-known organizations. We did make final grants to these groups, intending them as bridge grants to help support the organizations while they explored other avenues for funding. In this way, we moved from a kind of "block grants" approach to more project-centered funding, which was still centered on Andrew Carnegie's core concerns, namely education and international peace, but with emphases that addressed the most pressing national and global concerns. Some of the questions we began to focus on included the plight of urban high schools. Is their seemingly endless decline reversible? If so, how can we create improvements: one school at a time or city by city? What about the need to upgrade the status of schools of education on university campuses as well as their curriculum and the quality of the training they provide to teachers? Is there anything we can do to contribute to strengthening our democracy in terms of breaking down barriers to citizenship and to promote immigrant

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<sup>133</sup> See footnote 122.

civic integration? There was still a great deal the Corporation could contribute, we felt, in terms of continuing our work on nuclear nonproliferation, and in helping to stabilize the relationship between the United States and Russia through efforts to assist Russia's intelligentsia in a period of national transition, when they were caught between hope and hopelessness—between the allure of democracy and the pressures of both their own financial survival and of the national security needs of the newly minted Russian Federation. In Africa, our concern was to work with nations where stability, democracy, and reform were central to their development and to contribute to their progress by strengthening their universities, which will produce the African leaders of tomorrow, both women and men.

In terms of decisions about staff, even though the Corporation is an at-will institution, I wanted it to be clear that we did not have a university-type “tenure” system. Hence, we instituted two-year, renewable terms for all program officers and program chairs. We also tested several models of new personnel evaluation systems, eventually settling on one that seemed the most efficacious, providing incentives not only for work well done but also for extraordinary merit. These moves were all carried out with an eye to the future. I say that because it's important to bear in mind that the work of a foundation is not an abstraction, but a true reflection of the excellence, expertise, and dedication of its staff. It is also necessary to keep in mind that foundations do change direction from time to time and must have the flexibility to bring in new people with new visions of how program goals can be realized. This view of a foundation's work is also beneficial to the staff, because it discourages them from seeing the foundation either as a kind of permanent parking place for their careers or a dead end. The same way a foundation invests

in its grantees is the same way it should invest in the professional and career development of its staff members at every level.

Foundations *should* provide educational opportunities for their staff, encouraging the evolution of their skills and intellect and helping them find the resources to do so. After all, the more educated, trained and cultured a staff member is, the better equipped he or she will be as a grantmaker. This investment in staff members is particularly valued at the Corporation, because just about everything we do involves a focus on education—and we feel that we can't invest in others through our grantmaking without also investing in our own staff. The Corporation, therefore, pays the full tuition for courses contributing to a staff member's first undergraduate degree, job-related graduate courses, job-related certificate programs, executive training and other job-related courses that directly apply to responsibilities at the Corporation.<sup>134</sup>

It might be said that this emphasis on staff development contributes to staff departures because, as individuals gain both work experience and education, they may move on to other positions. But I see departures as a natural part of the growth process of both staff members and organizations, and a stepping stone for individuals' upward mobility. In fact, when staff take positions at other organizations that involve more responsibility, it means we've done our job as incubators of learning and development of staff goals, their skills, and their leadership potential. They are ready to take the next step in their careers.

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<sup>134</sup> The Corporation also pays 80 percent of the cost of courses for staff members enrolled in a graduate program and 50 percent of the cost of other courses from an accredited institution not related to maintaining their job. In recent years, a number of staff members have participated in these programs: four have entered undergraduate programs, six have either completed or are working on their Master's degrees and three are working on Ph.Ds.

We also encourage staff to become involved in the community and in the work of other groups and organizations, in part to carry on Andrew Carnegie's tradition of investing in others, but also in order to help keep them from becoming isolated from "the real world," and to gain wider experience and deeper understanding of the operations and challenges of a wide variety of organizations. This also serves to balance any perceptions of foundation staff as simply "armchair" dispensers of money. Naturally, creating such an environment may also lead to staff departures as individuals broaden their horizons and as their skills, experience and knowledge become apparent to others with new opportunities to offer, but if that is the case, so be it. To be known as a school for training leadership as well as an employer is a wonderful legacy for any institution.

Some of the directions that Carnegie Corporation has embarked on in recent years were based on the premise that changing times demand new solutions to problems. For example, foundation collaborations, such as those I highlighted earlier, while not usual in the past, have become a necessity in order to multiply the strength and impact of our grantmaking. The Corporation's Board Chairs, Trustees and I have paid close attention to the makeup of our Board of Trustees in order to select leaders from different segments of society to assist us as we go forward.

Indeed, the Corporation has always had exceptional Boards of Trustees. During my tenure, it has been a great privilege for the Corporation staff and for me to have benefited from the wisdom of several university presidents, former governors (including one who also served as U.S. Secretary of Education), former international cabinet ministers, the president of a major newspaper company, the former editor-in-chief of a national media

corporation, a former U.S. ambassador, a former senator, and an admiral, along with distinguished business, education, journalism, philanthropy, government and science leaders. The Corporation—and I, personally—have also gained enormously from the guidance and wise counsel of two extraordinary Board Chairs. Thomas H. Kean, former governor of New Jersey, former president of Drew University and co-chair of the 9/11 Commission, was first elected to the Board of Trustees in 1990. He served as Chair from 1997-2002. I am delighted that he will once again be serving as Chair in 2007, thus providing continuity for the Corporation as well as invaluable leadership. Helene L. Kaplan, Of Counsel, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, whose distinguished leadership in both the nonprofit and corporate worlds is quite remarkable, has served on the Corporation's Board of Trustees for more than two decades, including two ten-year terms as Trustee, two terms as Vice-Chair, and two terms as Chair of the Board, from 1985-1990 and from 2002 until 2007. Helene was also the first woman to serve as Chair of the Board. Her emphasis on governance and her contributions in helping to shape the scope and direction of the work of the Corporation have been immeasurable.

The time and dedication that our Board members have devoted to the Corporation over the years makes an important point about American philanthropy: its strength is not rooted in money alone. One of its most notable features is volunteerism. Individuals who comprise outstanding Boards such as ours contribute their time and expertise out of a deep sense of civic duty and a commitment to the public good. Carnegie Corporation of New York is extremely fortunate that such exceptional leaders have joined with us in carrying on the legacy of Andrew Carnegie.

## Investing in Ideas

Many of those reading this essay may be familiar with Andrew Carnegie's opinion that, "There is nothing inherently valuable in mere money...unless it is to be administered as a sacred trust for the good of others." To be the steward of such a trust doesn't mean simply writing checks; the utmost effort must be extended to ensure that philanthropic dollars are used wisely and effectively so as to have the most impact. Perhaps that is why I find myself drawn again and again to Andrew Carnegie's *Gospel of Wealth*, and to his cautionary reminder that, "Of every thousand dollars spent in so-called charity today, it is probable that nine hundred and fifty dollars is unwisely spent."

That's not to say that most of our grantees—in fact, the vast majority of grantees of most foundations—don't do vital, even indispensable work, or don't have important missions that are designed to advance the public good. What it *does* mean is that foundations should have clarity about their purpose and mission and be able to convey these values to the public, their staff and to grantees. Foundation staff and leadership should also be committed to respecting the spirit as well as the letter, of the donor's vision for the foundation and its work.

Safeguarding a foundation's mission is not only the task of the president and the Board, but must also be part of the very culture of the institution. Program officers must regard the foundation as an integrated, organic community of interests serving one overall mission, not as a collection of individual fiefdoms. That also means that leadership and program staff must be careful to weigh their personal or institutional aspirations against a realistic assessment of the limits of what they can accomplish in order to keep both in balance.

If all the elements of leadership, clarity of mission and staff focus are in place, then there are many opportunities for grantmaking to effect change. For example, grantmaking can support basic research, which can expand the parameters of knowledge in almost any given field, though its potential impact may take place over a long period of time. Grants can also support the implementation of evidence-based, time-and-scientifically tested findings in order to advance policy in social, scientific, cultural, educational or other realms. Along with implementation, grantmaking can promote the dissemination of a treasurehouse of ideas grounded in solid research that might have been neglected or overlooked. This is particularly important in an era of specialization, when new facts and knowledge can help to create synthesis among seemingly disparate ideas and help to unify different groups, individuals and organizations who find newly discovered common ground. Grantmaking may seem distant from actual research or direct involvement in the development or implementation of programs, projects and policies that can benefit society, but it is a very powerful tool.

The catalysts for change, the incubators of ideas and major investors in change are still the grantee organizations. Foundations can certainly take pride in the wisdom of their investments in various organizations but they should not be tempted to usurp the recognition that is due to their grantees. Most of the time, foundations provide funding for worthwhile projects—but funding itself is not excellence; it *supports* excellence. In that context, leaders must take care not to stifle creativity or interfere with the activities of grantees by trying to micromanage their work. The foundation's investment in a grantee is a way of activating and advancing its own priorities—but it is still

the grantee who has the responsibility of actually carrying out the work.

Perhaps it seems evident, but foundations are not, at any given time, a grantor's institution; they don't carry the grantor's name, but the name of the founder. What foundation staff and leadership are doing is fulfilling the mandate of a donor who endowed a foundation to carry out work in certain areas, or with specific aims. Indeed, donor intent is the key element of foundation work. There are a number of different types of foundations, each of which should follow the dictates of the individual or family that created them. For example, operating foundations generally are not grantmaking institutions. They operate facilities or institutions devoted to a specific charitable activity spelled out in their charters. Some operating foundations may use their endowment to conduct research while others may have been created to provide such direct services as managing museums, historical sites, providing assistance to the handicapped, etc. Other foundations, such as the Aaron Diamond Foundation, the Vincent Astor Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Foundation focus on spending their entire endowment—often within a particular time span—in the service of particular ideas or causes, and then close their doors. Family foundations often have a twofold purpose: to make grants but also to maintain the foundation as a kind of laboratory to train future generations of the family and promote the art of giving as part of the family culture. Private grantmaking foundations, such as Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Rockefeller, Ford, MacArthur, Mellon and other foundations, were created by their donors to carry out philanthropic efforts in perpetuity.

It is our good fortune that Andrew Carnegie, an extraordinary and prescient man

who was both financially and intellectually generous, understood that the interpretation of his philanthropic intentions might have to take a different form at different times, especially in view of the fact that he specifically endowed the foundation to carry out his grantmaking in perpetuity. In his 1911 letter of gift to the Corporation, Carnegie wrote, "My desire is that the work which I hav [sic]<sup>135</sup> been carrying on, or similar beneficial work, shall continue during this and future generations."

In upholding Carnegie's traditions, we are the facilitators, and it is often our role to help mobilize other players around a central idea and help smooth the way for them to work together. Being a funder does give you the leverage, even the obligation, to use what influence you have, including convening power and access to other foundations and philanthropies, to ensure that promising programs and projects are able to attract all the resources they need in order to be carried out most effectively.

Notwithstanding all this, there are times when a foundation itself must, out of necessity, take center stage. That happens when a certain issue or problem must be addressed but no nonprofit organization seems to have that particular concern on their agenda. When such a situation arises, foundation staff and leadership may come to the conclusion that the only way to focus public attention on the issue is if they mobilize their private resources to advance action or explore proposed responses and solutions.

Many foundations have taken that path, and the Corporation is one of them. Among the commissions and initiatives we supported in the past were the Carnegie Commission on

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<sup>135</sup> Andrew Carnegie was a devoted proponent of "simplified spelling." He said, "What could be a more effective agency for world peace than to have all men able to communicate with each other in the same language, especially if that language were English?"

Educational Television; the Carnegie Commission on the Future of Public Broadcasting; the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education; the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict; the Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology and Government; the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development; the Carnegie Task Force on Learning in the Primary Grades; and the Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children. During the past decade we launched a number of initiatives (some of which I have also alluded to earlier), such as Schools for a New Society, dedicated to urban high school reform in seven cities across the United States; Teachers for a New Era, focused on improving teacher education and training through the development of excellent schools of education; the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa; the Carnegie Advisory Council on Advancing Literacy to examine both research and reading policies and make recommendations for implementation strategies; and the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education, which grew out of discussions with the deans of leading journalism schools at four of America's top research universities—Berkeley, Columbia, Northwestern and the University of Southern California, along with the director of the Shorenstein Center at Harvard University—and centers on laying a foundation for developing a vision of what a journalism school can be at an exemplary institution of higher education.<sup>136</sup>

In all of these cases, Carnegie Corporation did not dictate what the work of the commission, task force, council or initiative should be. The focus was instead on channeling the

efforts of experts, educators, policymakers, scholars, and others, under the leadership of those who were dedicated, as was the foundation, to finding real, workable solutions to problems, and to developing substantive evidence and data to support the conclusions that were reached. There is no value to fulfilling preconceived notions about how particular issues should be addressed. Foundations must be neutral in outlook in order to create an environment in which exploration of all relevant areas of learning and knowledge and intellectual insight are encouraged in an atmosphere of intellectual rigor. The Carnegie Scholars Program, which I referred to earlier, does not have templates for how scholars should conduct their work or what their findings should be.

The freedom and ability to explore issues and problems that have not been fully addressed—or addressed at all—by private organizations or government agencies is one of the reasons that American foundations are critical to our society: it's a rare instance in which governments, whether local, state or national, are able to move with alacrity or offer innovative solutions to civic problems, or even develop models to demonstrate how proposed solutions may work in a real-world environment. Foundations *can* operate that way, and the fact that they often *do*, serving as incubators for progressive, even pioneering ideas, provides the public with program and policy alternatives they might otherwise never even know about or have the opportunity to consider. Indeed, perhaps one of the most important attributes of foundations is this very capacity to be flexible, a characteristic that can be of incalculable value in a complex society such as ours, which has so many checks and balances. Institutions can be highly bureaucratized—in fact, one of the ways they protect themselves is by arming themselves with an elaborate bureaucracy and

<sup>136</sup> Since the initiative was announced in 2005, four more institutions—the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland; the Missouri School of Journalism at the University of Missouri; the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University; and the School of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin—have joined in the curriculum enrichment component of the initiative.

complicated processes for getting things done. That foundations are able to proceed more quickly, and with wider latitude, to provide model solutions to problems, and to help put important issues on the nation's front burner, highlights the lasting contributions that American foundations make to our nation.

### Worth the Risk?

Every foundation claims that it's in the business of investing in innovation and new, important ideas and therefore, is taking risks. It's hard to identify risk in supporting projects or leaders who have a 99.9 percent chance of success, which is, unfortunately, often closer to the truth about the kinds of undertakings that receive foundation funding. Foundations *should* be in the risk business a lot more than they are because ideas need to be tested. This is particularly important in the policy realm because "solutions" have to be tested, too. Government agencies generally can't present policies to the public with the caveat that they are "risky," but foundations can do just that. They can take a chance on a promising policy, project or idea that may, in the end, turn out to be a failure, because analyzing failure is how to discover what works. This is the time-honored process of scientific research, in which failures are as important as successes. Each failure helps to narrow down the direction to be followed to achieve a successful result. While foundations claim to be in the risk business, many of their staff have a hard time coping with failure because the notion of risk is actually not built into the environment in which they work. With any hint of "failure," foundation staff will worry for their reputations, and grantees may fear that their grants will not be renewed.

It has always surprised me that the social sciences, which are patterned after the basic sciences, appear to be so risk averse. In my ob-

servations, social scientists will sometimes make extravagant claims about what they aim to accomplish, but don't always subject their explorations to a rigorous critique if a particular theory or method failed. Such analyses would boost the standing of the social sciences and promote confidence about future claims. Our competitive culture, where individuals vie for the same federal and corporate dollars, seems to discourage researchers from doing this.

This is the same phenomenon I touched on earlier, when I discussed the tension at research universities between basic research and the need to conduct research with immediate, commercial applications. This tension also exists in the field of philanthropy, not only in regard to research but also in terms of programmatic and project results. It exists on both sides of the donor-grantee relationship. Funders are expected, by the public and by government regulators, to achieve results that can be quickly and succinctly charted, quantified, measured by hard data and reduced to spread-sheet equations. For potential grantees, the competition today for government and philanthropic funding is so intense that the pressure to guarantee a "good outcome" often leads to over-promising what will be achieved. Therefore, at the conclusion of the funded work, nothing but an absolute triumph will be acceptable to all parties involved. (Even if real success was elusive, the claim will be made that "moral victory was ours.") This is where the language used to describe such enterprises begins to sparkle with superlatives, and assurances are given that planned work is "unprecedented," "path-breaking, visionary," or even "unique" (the most abused and overused adjective of all). In the end, if the results are at best mundane, or the project is a failure, cynicism and skepticism that anything *can* be accomplished with a particular issue or in

bringing about some civic, social, scientific or other advancement will be the likely result.

Many foundations, faced with past disappointments in terms of translating the knowledge generated by their work into policy, have switched to funding projects that produce immediate and easily quantifiable results. Understanding this, grantees more often approach foundations with unrealistic goals or claims; program officers all too often accept them as achievable benchmarks. I don't know why I continue to be surprised by a kind of benign neglect in judging the difference between promises made and promises kept about funded projects. Failure to reach stated goals should be followed by in-depth analysis to understand the reasons for it. What happened? What could have been done better, or differently? Even a "failed" project generates some knowledge. Assessing projects this way makes it easier to extract those necessary lessons learned from them and spares the program staff feeling that they showed poor judgment, a lack of foresight, or even were incompetent. Foundations can hardly be the only institutions on earth immune to failure and no one should expect them to be.

At Carnegie Corporation, while we are pleased to share our accomplishments, we do not shy away from discussing those occasions where we have fallen short. In fact, the Corporation was among the first foundations to produce an annual report (it has been doing so for more than eighty years), in an effort to provide a complete and accurate accounting of its work. The responsibility for an institution such as Carnegie Corporation to be accountable for its grantmaking was best summed up by one of our earlier trustees, who declared that it was incumbent upon foundations to have "glass pockets." Today, we uphold that tradition by constantly examining and assessing the impact

of our grantmaking and trying to learn from our failures as well as our successes—and by sharing what we've learned with both the public and the foundation community.

For example, as noted earlier, we take great pride in the fact that we funded *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, Gunnar Myrdal's 1944 landmark study on race relations in the United States, but the Corporation did not recognize its importance when the report was completed and did not promote it, in part because it had not fulfilled the somewhat limited purpose for which it was commissioned: to help guide Corporation grantmaking beyond its historic involvement in black education in the South. What the Corporation got, instead, was a clarion call for Americans to live up to the ideals of the American Creed or contemplate a deterioration of the values and vision that unites the country and makes it great. The study has been called "the most penetrating and important book on our contemporary American civilization that has been written,"<sup>137</sup> but was still neglected for a time because it was not the product that the Corporation had planned on.

Similarly, the Carnegie Americanization Study of the early 1920s did not have the impact that the foundation expected. The effort was led by Allen Burns, the executive secretary of the Cleveland Foundation and a former dean of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy. Those involved saw the study "as the first step towards developing the U.S.-wide policy on immigration. Burns had identified an immediate need for such policy 'as the present confusion in Washington is causing increased discontent among our immigrants.'<sup>138</sup> The researchers emphasized

137 *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience* by Walter A. Jackson (The University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

138 Burns to Bertram, Jan. 26, 1919 in CCNY Records, Series IIIA (Grant Files), box 41, folder 5.

that Americanization was not an ‘unchangeable political, domestic and economic regime once and for all delivered to the fathers, but a growing and broadening national life, inclusive of the best wherever found. With all our rich heritages, Americanism will develop best [through] a mutual giving and taking of contributions from both newer and older Americans in the interest of the commonwealth.’”<sup>139,140</sup>

The study received almost no public attention and failed to generate support for immigration policies that recognized immigrants’ contributions to the development of the United States. In fact, just the opposite took place. The U.S., in the 1920s, instituted restrictive immigration policies that made a study about incorporating immigrants into American life—the focus of the Carnegie series—seem irrelevant. Now, we look back at the study, which was commissioned by the Corporation’s fourth president, Henry S. Pritchett, and marvel at the fact that, at the beginning of the *last* century, Americans were wrestling with the same issues about immigration and “Americanization” that are part of the national debates going on today, and were equally divided on the subject. Pritchett’s thoughts at the time still resonate: “Some [immigrants] do not find out for years that the public schools are free, that the police do not have the same power as in Russia, that citizenship is possible under certain conditions. The function of the government in dealing with this mass of incoming human beings has been merely to act as a screen for shutting out the most objectionable. No agency attempts to deal with the immigrant’s needs after he has left Ellis Island... a private agency, in good rela-

tions with the government, could put into each newcomer’s hands a brief statement in his own language, of his rights and privileges.”<sup>141</sup>

In recent years, there have also been grants that did not achieve the results we and our colleagues had hoped for. In 2000, the Corporation and other foundations made grants to the Southern African Political Economy Series Trust in Zimbabwe, to support the efforts of the Constitutional Commission of Zimbabwe, which was drafting a new constitution for that country under its president Robert Mugabe. It was the Corporation’s intention to support democratic reform and the rule of law in Zimbabwe through the constitutional process, as well as to support the efforts of constitutional advocates. However, these efforts have fallen short of the mark. The constitution proved to be an ineffective document that did not provide the societal protections we were seeking.

Our library-related work in sub-Saharan Africa has also encountered problems. The needs are so great in Africa that many individuals and organizations are moved to provide immediate assistance without any attention to long-term investments and sustainability. In one case, our eagerness to help improve libraries and library services in selected African nations spurred us to act as donors responding to needs rather than as long-term investors, and certainly, our grantees saw us that way. We wanted to help to develop modern libraries, seeing them, along with African universities, as the engines of change on the continent—a resource that would provide students, citizens, and future leaders with a gateway to knowledge. Instead, our funding was often used to cover costs or as budget relief, not for the intended purpose of helping to create excel-

139 “Minutes of Study of Method of Americanization, Third Conference, Apr. 15, 1918,” CCNY Records, Series IIIA (Grant Files), box 41, folder 4.

140 Jane Gorjevsky. “Documenting Russian and Eastern European Immigrant Culture in American Manuscript Repositories: Private Philanthropy Archives.” Cited from manuscript to be published in *Slavic & East European Information Resources*, Vol. 7, issues 2/3.

141 Pritchett, “Fields of Activity Open to the Carnegie Corporation,” Apr. 15, 1916 in CCNY Records, Series I.D (Policy and Program Files), box 1, folder 1.

lent modern libraries. We also spread our resources too thin, trying to fund too many disparate efforts in too many places, which did not produce the kind of substantive improvement we hoped for. We have since reorganized our program for African libraries, focusing on libraries in South Africa, with an overall goal of creating models of excellence that have well-trained staff and that meet the quality and standards set by the International Federation of Library Associations. Increased Internet access is a major priority. We at the Corporation were gratified in July 2006 to help dedicate one of the first such model libraries created with Corporation support, the Bessie Head Library in Pietermaritzburg.

These examples are important because sharing not only our successes but also our “failures” is helpful to the foundation community. If we share our mistakes there is less chance that they will be replicated or repeated, which is a benefit to funders as well as to grantees and potential grantees. We want to know when there are problems and we want to share what we’ve learned about how to confront them. Admitting mistakes gives us the moral courage to ask for the return of grant funds when they have not been used as intended as, for example, when an organization turns out not to have the capacity to carry out the work it had proposed. When the Corporation has faced that situation on a handful of occasions, and asked that grant monies to be returned to us, sometimes we even received interest on the funds being sent back. We are never embarrassed to do this with either domestic or international grantees. It has helped us to develop further checks and balances in our oversight procedures including, when appropriate, reviews by independent firms. How the foundation spends money and how it evaluates its spending are equally important. Some of our

safeguards now include reviewing the financial health of grantee organizations (specifically, review of their financial statements); requiring detailed budgets and annual progress and audited financial reports from grantees, with payments contingent upon adequate progress toward grant goals; and placing additional conditions on grants when there is cause for concern about a project’s structure, the grantee organization’s financial health, or its ability to work toward sustainability.

Grant renewals present their own difficulties. Often, there hasn’t been enough time to evaluate what has been accomplished by the project being funded, or even its potential impact. I’ve sometimes thought there should be some additional process, such as bridge grants, that would allow a project up for renewal to continue until all the information needed for a thorough assessment is available.

While these measures necessarily speak to financial concerns, foundations must also audit intellectual claims and the actual content and outcomes of grant projects. This vigilance on all fronts is good for the nonprofit field at large, and good for the integrity of programs, program officers and consultants. It should encourage better allocation of valuable resources to worthwhile causes.

### “The Knowledge Business”

In the United States today, there are roughly 71,000 grantmaking foundations, an increase of more than 77 percent over a decade.<sup>142</sup> More are being created all the time to serve all kinds of purposes. It seems that whatever a foundation’s charter says, or how a foundation’s staff and Trustees see the world in terms of politics or culture or societal imperatives, in reality, all of us in the philanthropic field

<sup>142</sup> “Foundations’ Giving is Said to Have Set Record in ’06,” *The New York Times*, April 3, 2007.

are in one and the same business: increasing knowledge and creativity, and making sure that knowledge is disseminated as far and wide as possible. From my perspective, what that means is that foundations should not be trying to package knowledge into any kind of ideological fad—there are enough individuals, institutions, political parties and other groups or organizations more than ready to do *that*. Our democracy itself and our society deserve an educated citizenry. Our nation must have a cadre of skilled professionals in the realms of science, technology, medicine, the arts and business. In pursuit of these national goals, we don't need to tell our fellow citizens what to think: Americans have a long tradition of being independent-minded and have no aversion to common sense. We should trust them to come to their own thoughtful conclusions about issues confronting our society—if they are armed with comprehensive, objective facts, I am sure they will reach reasonable and objective conclusions. A foundation's goal is to provide avenues for finding and delivering objective information to all.

It worries me how standardized and uniform our sources of information have become, how obsession with entertainment has trumped the quest for knowledge and how little open, serious and free discussion seems to take place. Even our current use of language itself reflects this state of affairs. The great English language, so rich and so dynamic, seems bereft of much of its precision, vibrancy and creativity. This is partially due to a growing concern with "political correctness." This bland speech reflects a desire to deter any criticism by avoiding clarity and decisiveness. It uses obfuscation as a shield against the contentious ills of our world and our society, which is a dangerous path to follow. Open discussion is vital for the function of democracy, even to its

survival. In that connection, I am reminded of the words of author Nien Cheng, whose book, *Life and Death in Shanghai*,<sup>143</sup> describes her experiences during China's "cultural revolution." She writes, "When the penalty for speaking one's mind is so great, nobody knows what anybody else thinks."

Foundations are not immune to the effects of political, cultural and social trends in our society, including the increasing pervasiveness of political correctness that covers the entire political spectrum, from the left to the right and back again. What concerns me is the impact of these trends, which see some foundations drifting into self-censorship, a pernicious way of repressing ideas and debate. Besides, that's usually a losing battle because there is no way to protect people from ideas. Ideas cannot be made "safe" for people; individuals simply have to make up their minds on their own. This is one of the most important ways that society progresses: through the interplay of ideas, opinions and debate.

While some foundations are ideologically "neutral," or careful, others are not at all averse to stating specific philosophical, political, theological or other positions in order to promote their causes. I am referring, of course, to some operating foundations, which have well-defined political or ideological missions. We at Carnegie Corporation of New York have adopted a different course of action: we do not shy away from supporting scholars, institutions, organizations and projects because of or in spite of their ideological views. The Corporation is committed to the idea of investing in a wide range of both competing and complementary scholars and institutions as one way we can increase and help to create knowledge. Our goal is to augment the sources of

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<sup>143</sup> *Life and Death in Shanghai* (Grove Press, 1987).

knowledge that may be drawn upon to inform American leaders and citizens about the issues on the nation's agenda, and thus enrich discussion and debate about them.

A similar philosophy guided the late Ambassador Walter Annenberg when he launched his landmark 1993 Annenberg Challenge. His matching fund grant of \$100 million a year for five years eventually attracted an additional \$600 million in private sector monies and helped to create major public-private bonds on a scale where none existed before. The largest private gift to public schools in U.S. history, the Challenge reached out to groups and individuals working across an extraordinarily diverse spectrum of school reform efforts, many of them already being supported by other foundations. The Annenberg Challenge, which invested in an open marketplace of competing ideas and solutions, did not treat these organizations as contractors for any particular philosophy of reform, but rather sought to empower and invigorate skilled and visionary school reformers. It did so without ideological or political bias of any kind. As noted in *Reconnecting Education & Foundations*, the Annenberg grant funds “had to harness, not supplant, promising local reform efforts.”<sup>144</sup> The Annenberg effort was a “challenge” in the truest sense of the word—not merely financial, but a moral and political challenge, as well—because its intent was to galvanize the nation, to energize and empower educators, administrators, parents, school district personnel, teachers, policymakers and concerned citizens from every walk of life to work in and with their local schools in order to make them better places for children to learn. The Challenge invested heavily in research and evaluation to ensure the

availability of extensive data and analysis and published its data without bias or prejudice. More than anything, the Challenge once again put the urgency of reforming our K-12 educational system on the top of the nation's agenda and all good ideas and promising programs were welcome to offer their contributions.

Because of its distinguished reputation and history, Carnegie Corporation has also been able to be a great convener of diverse individuals and institutions, often providing a venue for differing—even opposing—views to be aired. Since 2000, for example, when we hosted a conversation between the leading education advisors to the Bush and Gore presidential campaigns, attended by an audience of educators, policymakers, nonprofit leaders and others, we have held gatherings called Carnegie Forums to focus on critical issues of national concern. For example, we have held forums on “Money and Politics” with Senator John McCain (R-AZ) as the featured speaker; on “Homeland Security,” with former Senator Gary Hart (D-CO) who had also co-chaired the U.S. Commission on National Security/21<sup>st</sup> Century; and on “Foreign Policy,” which included presentations by James Hoge, editor of *Foreign Affairs*, Richard Cohen, columnist for *The Washington Post*, and Cynthia Tucker, editorial page editor of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. We reprised the 2000 forum by hosting a discussion of education issues relating to the 2004 presidential campaign. Expressing the views of the Bush-Cheney campaign was Sandy Kress, widely acknowledged as the architect of *No Child Left Behind*; Jon Schnur, a seven-year veteran of the Clinton administration who, during his tenure, served as policy advisor on K-12 education and was White House Associate Director for Educational Policy, highlighted the policies of the Kerry-Edwards campaign.

<sup>144</sup> *Reconnecting Education & Foundations: Turning Good Intentions into Educational Capital*; Ray Bacchetti and Thomas Ehrlich, Editors (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2007).

Another convening, held before the 2000 presidential election, brought together a wide array of U.S. national security advisors and other experts on Russia—its demography, politics, culture, educational institutions, military and social structure, et al—along with senior policy officials from past administrations whose work had focused on Russia. Our aim in drawing these individuals together was to create policy recommendations about Russia based on bipartisan ideas and inculcating a historical perspective for whichever candidate—Democrat or Republican—became president. During that same year, the Corporation and the MacArthur Foundation convened a distinguished, bipartisan group of experts in Washington, D.C. to discuss the possible consequences of deploying the limited national missile defense system then under consideration by the Clinton administration. A letter was sent by the group, which included former Senator Sam Nunn, retired general John M. Shalikashvili, retired Admiral William A. Owens, Susan Eisenhower, president (now chairman emeritus) of the Eisenhower Institute, Jessica Mathews, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, former U.S. Secretary of Defense William J. Perry and others, to inform President Clinton of their concerns. In addition, we have convened individuals from different American Muslim groups as well as Carnegie Scholars whose projects focus on different aspects of Islam.

About two weeks after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Corporation brought together a large group of individuals representing philanthropic organizations, nonprofits, government agencies and others working on the historic relief effort marshaled in the wake of the attacks. Our aim was to pool information about each other's plans and resources so we did not duplicate each other's activities. No template for such coordination

existed, so it was very important that, from the very beginning of our relief efforts, we all discussed and understood what role each group and organization would play.

More recently, we convened a conference on reforming high schools, held in partnership with *Education Week*, that is being followed by a special series of reports on high school reform to be published by *Education Week* over two years. We also brought together policymakers, scholars and academic experts to discuss U.S. policy toward Eurasia. The meeting addressed questions such as *How do current U.S. policies in post-Soviet Eurasia impact its relations with Russia?* and, *To what extent is the U.S. policy toward the broader region a product of its relations with Russia?* Another recent Corporation-supported gathering took place in Washington, D.C. under the leadership of former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and Justice Stephen Breyer. This conference, which was sponsored by the Georgetown University Law School and the American Law Institute, focused on "Fair and Independent Courts: A Conference on the State of the Judiciary" and involved leaders from the business and media communities, nonprofit sector, and government, including John G. Roberts, Chief Justice of the United States and Alberto Gonzales, the U.S. Attorney General. Participants addressed such topics as the history and contemporary criticisms of the judiciary; judicial selection and removal at both the federal and state levels; judicial elections; interbranch relations; recent polls of public attitudes; the role of the media; and suggestions for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the judiciary. In addition, Corporation funding helped to support a significant 2005 "Track II" meeting involving representatives of North Korea and the United States that led directly to resumption of long-stalled official negotiations.

Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes famously stated, “The best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market.”<sup>145</sup> The Corporation is committed to helping keep that marketplace healthy, vital, and free. I have written earlier in this essay that too much information can be paralyzing, but so can a shortage of ideas. In trying to diffuse a crisis or deal with long- or even short-term societal issues, the freedom to sort through, evaluate and compare ideas helps to create context and historical perspective. These are necessary to inform decisions about the future. Very rarely is the solution to a problem—even one with vast, international implications—written on a completely blank slate.

Philanthropy in general is sometimes considered by many to be meddling. Perhaps driven by discomfort with the politically committed agendas of so many operating foundations, some Americans have become suspicious of philanthropy, but most are aware of the great benefits that charitable and philanthropic efforts provide to our nation in meeting short-term needs while searching for long-term solutions. But since both charity and philanthropy play such a major role in our society, it is normal for questions to be raised about their intentions and their impact, as well as the regulations and controls that govern their operations.

Many questions about voluntary associations have actually been raised before. Even George Washington feared that nongovernmental organizations would become too powerful—after all, voluntary associations like the Sons of Liberty had helped the colonies defeat England, then the world’s mightiest power. In his farewell address to Congress in 1796, Wash-

ington warned that “cunning, ambitious and unprincipled men” could use these associations to “subvert the power of the people, and to usurp for themselves the reins of government.”

Throughout American history, the practice of sharing wealth for public benefit has periodically rubbed our democratic principles the wrong way. The historian Robert Bremner adroitly captures our mixed feelings about such giving, saying: “We expect rich men to be generous with their wealth, and criticize them when they are not—but when they make benefactions, we question their motives, deplore the methods by which they obtained their abundance, and wonder whether their gifts will not do more harm than good.”<sup>146</sup>

Questioning the motivation of donors is a favorite preoccupation of pundits and spinmasters, but motivation is not the main issue—action is. Transparency is. Impact is. How the money is used for the public good and how it is accounted for is what matters in the end. In that regard, it should be noted that individuals such as Andrew Carnegie, who set up foundations in the early part of the twentieth century, did so when there were no income taxes, so there was no financial benefit for them in giving away their money. Now, in an era of estate tax reform, wealthy individuals could easily choose to keep their money in the hands of their own families, but philanthropy seems to be ingrained in the American character. In 2004, for example, estimated charitable giving was nearly \$250 billion dollars, with individual giving accounting for nearly three-quarters of those funds.<sup>147</sup> And the wealthy are hardly the only donors: About 70 to 80 percent of Americans contribute annually to at least one charity.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>145</sup> *Abrams v. United States*, 1919.

<sup>146</sup> *American Philanthropy* by Robert H. Bremner (University of Chicago Press, 1988).

<sup>147</sup> *Giving USA 2005* (Giving USA Foundation).

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*

It is not only in America that philanthropists, as well as other private, nonprofit organizations, are sometimes viewed with suspicion, and their societal role has even been marginalized by legislation. England enacted its landmark Statute of Charitable Uses in 1601. This law codified the state's responsibility—not any private charitable entity—for assisting the poor, aged and orphaned, as well as for providing hospitals, schools and universities. Other nations on the European continent and elsewhere followed this model, dampening the growth of civil society, a term that refers to all the voluntary entities that operate apart from government and business.

There are similar examples from other parts of the world. In Latin America, because the Church, in the past, was associated with conquering powers and colonial empires, nationalist, liberal, democratic and republican movements sidelined the Church's influence. Over time, with the loss of political power, the Church became identified with providing charity to individuals, while the state promoted the idea that it should be identified with philanthropy aimed at promoting the public welfare. Today, in Latin America, the newly emerging private-sector philanthropies are trying to make a place for themselves without seeming to undermine the state's authority, especially since Catholic and evangelical organizations are among these groups.

Private philanthropic and charitable organizations, while growing in number and the level of giving, must tread lightly in Russia, as the government is clearly concerned about the influence of both domestic and international nonprofits. Newly enacted registration rules and other regulations have brought greater state oversight over Russian and foreign nonprofit organizations operating in the country. Organizations working in the fields of promot-

ing democracy, the rule of law, a free press and human rights have become particular targets of governmental regulations. Most foreign non-governmental organizations, many of which are adoption agencies, have been registered under the new Russian law and are continuing their operations.

An illustration of the way in which charities and philanthropies are sometimes viewed outside the United States can be seen in the reaction of the president of the University of Denmark to an address I gave a few years ago on the subject of raising funds from private sources to help support institutions of higher education. The president was scandalized by the idea, telling me that in his country, it was against the law to solicit private donations for public universities, since supporting those institutions was the responsibility of the state.

All this may soon change because, with the achievements of American philanthropy as both an example and a catalyst, the European Union is considering adopting rules that would encourage more American-style philanthropy. In England, Oxford University recently decided that philanthropic fundraising needed to be an ongoing activity and established a Development Office as part of the University's administration; similarly, the United Kingdom's Cambridge University now conducts fundraising both in Britain and the United States. (In fact, almost all United Kingdom-based universities are now involved in fundraising.) New philanthropies are emerging in Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Mexico and elsewhere, and the trend will most likely continue. Philanthropic efforts are even emerging in Asia, especially in relation to health and education.

George Washington was worried that a major force outside of government (such as voluntary organizations), that was in control

of large amounts of money, could play a significant and unpredictable role in our national life and in the government's ability to carry out its responsibilities. But as this "independent" sector has developed, it has come to play a role that complements governmental efforts and has contributed greatly to the evolution of our democracy. In fact, the independent sector has been a true engine of growth for civil society, which, in its modern scale and magnitude, is primarily an American invention. However, it's not surprising that in some quarters of the government, foundations and the like are still seen as potential troublemakers—and in a way, they are. Foundations are agents of change, independent actors whose mission is to help create knowledge and, as appropriate, to challenge the status quo. This is all to the good.

The overwhelming majority of philanthropic foundations in this country absolutely, unquestionably and with utter dedication, use their resources, be they great or small, to do the "real and permanent good in this world" that Andrew Carnegie spoke of. Whether they were created at the beginning of the twentieth century or the cusp of the twenty-first, it's important to remember that they were founded completely voluntarily, by men and women who didn't have to share their resources with anyone else but decided that they had an obligation to contribute to the welfare of their fellow human beings. Is everything foundations have done constructive? Certainly not. Are all the ideas they support popular? Again, the answer may be no. Does everything foundations do, in the end, really contribute to the public good? Yes, but also, perhaps with limitations that we must be aware of. After all, the successful implementation of any idea or proposal requires social acceptance and political will, and both of those take great effort

and often, long spans of time. But the same can be said of all kinds of initiatives launched by private citizens and governmental agencies. Some succeed, some fail; many fall somewhere in the middle. It may be that the only thing we can say with certainty about all the efforts to improve our nation as well as the wider world is that we constantly encounter problems we don't yet know how to solve. After all, our society is always in flux. New challenges emerge. Some endemic problems remain to be solved. It is the obligation of foundations to contribute to helping solve these problems through their grantmaking because they have been endowed with the means to help. Hence, they should always be open to the opportunities that will allow them to invest their resources effectively, wisely, and with all due diligence—but also with both the hope and the confidence that their work is building knowledge that will bring benefits today, and perhaps for generations to come. At Carnegie Corporation of New York, we have been in the knowledge business for nearly one hundred years now, and we look forward, every day, to the next new and important idea we will learn about or help to preserve for posterity, or to disseminate across our nation, even around the globe. Progress, after all, begets progress so there will always be problems that need solving with creativity and an eye to a future that is better, more inclusive of all humankind—and more at peace—than the one we inherited.

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## Conclusion

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It must be obvious to all who have come into contact with any aspect of America's nonprofit sector that this segment of our society is not a monolith. Even its diversity is diverse! This is certainly the case with the three institutional cultures that were the subject of this essay,

namely, libraries—and by extension, museums with similar missions—universities, and philanthropy. Libraries and museums have been with us for a very long time; so have universities, for that matter, and so has charity. But as has been discussed, philanthropy—specifically, the “scientific” version that Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller championed—is primarily rooted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and, until recently, predominantly an American phenomenon. It is gratifying, though, to find that the notion of philanthropy and of civil society is beginning to spread across the world.

The three cultures highlighted here have distinct traditions and function in different ways, but there are also certain commonalities among them. For example, they are all dedicated to the preservation of cultural and historical legacies and to the creation of knowledge, to the advancement of learning and scholarship, to the promotion of the common good, and they all have faith in Progress, however one may define that concept. In our democratic society, all three stand for opportunity and for freedom. Today, they stand as living monuments, testaments to philanthropy—to the right of individuals to dedicate their private wealth to the common good, not only for the benefit of our society but for the international community, as well. In that regard, I am particularly proud of the fact that, along with many of our sister institutions, Carnegie Corporation’s grantmaking is carried out across national and international borders and across political spectrums. We have supported and continue to support excellence, innovative ideas, sound scholarship, and the creation and dissemination of knowledge.

Of course, all the institutions that this essay deals with have one common goal: to promote knowledge and educate our citizens as well as to serve our society. All three help

to provide Americans with a sense of ownership, of having a stake in the strength and vibrancy of our democracy and of our society. What they also have in common is that, as American institutions, they know that they owe their existence to the support of the public, either through government funding or contracts—because citizens have made clear to their elected officials that they want these supports in place—or through private generosity in the form of contributions both large and small. After all, it is the citizens of the United States who have made giving a right and also supported tax-exemption for giving. It is they, the public, who have institutionalized private generosity and hence, have the right to insist on transparency, accountability and integrity in both philanthropy and charity. More and more now, an invaluable combination of public/private funding is becoming the norm, at least in our country. The institutions highlighted in this essay can be seen as models for those partnerships.

One example of America’s continuing commitment to the institutions that embody these cultures and their service in the name of what I’ve termed the knowledge business is our expenditures for education. The U.S. Department of Education currently (FY 2007) administers a budget of about \$88.9 billion per year—\$57.6 billion in discretionary appropriations and \$31.3 billion in mandatory appropriations—and operates programs that touch on every area and level of education.<sup>149</sup> But that is

<sup>149</sup> From the web site of the U.S. Department of Education, <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/index.html?src=ln>: “The Department’s elementary and secondary programs annually serve more than 14,600 school districts and approximately 54 million students attending more than 94,000 public schools and 27,000 private schools. Department programs also provide grant, loan, and work-study assistance to more than 10 million postsecondary students... That said, it is important to point out that education in America is primarily a State and local responsibility, and ED’s budget is only a small part of both total national education spending and the overall Federal budget.”

only a portion of the public funding devoted to education: state and local expenditures on all levels of education in 2001-2, for example, were \$594.6 billion.<sup>150</sup> Private philanthropy provides many billions more for both K-12 education as well as for colleges and universities. As Americans, in addition to our fiscal commitment to education—which is each generation’s investment in the future of the next, as well as in the strength of our nation and its democracy—we should take pride in the fact that even with its many challenges, the educational system of the United States still offers remarkable opportunities to its citizens as well as to international students. And when it comes to our colleges and universities, there is no argument that many of them are still the greatest in the world.

It should be an additional source of pride that from 1862 on, with the advent of the Land-Grant Colleges Act (the Morrill Act) establishing institutions of higher education in every state, access to colleges and universities—which at one time was a pipe dream for the majority of Americans—has become a reality for increasing numbers of students. In fact, in this nation, through our public universities, we have democratized access to education and nationalized opportunity. Yet in the realm of education, where our nation has seen opportunities provided and promises fulfilled, there continues to be a dismaying disequilibrium. While more than 16.6 million individuals enrolled in four-year institutions of higher education in 2002,<sup>151</sup> just 54 percent of students entering four-year colleges in 1997, for example, had a degree six years later.<sup>152</sup>

150 Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d05/tables/dt05\\_028.asp?referrer=list](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d05/tables/dt05_028.asp?referrer=list).

151 From the web site of the U.S. Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/tables/06s0265.xls>.

152 “U.S. college drop-out rate sparks concern,” The Associated Press, published on MSNBC.com (et al), November 15, 2005. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10053859/>.

What also ties together libraries, universities, and philanthropic organizations is their faith in the future and their common goal of educating our citizens and serving both our democracy and its institutions. They also believe in the power of private-sector philanthropy as an important form of participatory democracy—in fact, as one of the foundations of our society. In that connection, let us remember that while the concept of scientific philanthropy is relatively new, traditions of charity and nascent philanthropy trace their roots to the early years of our nation’s independence. One of my favorite examples of how the American public recognized and praised the spirit of volunteerism that seemed to abound in the newly formed United States appears in the September 1787 edition of the *Pennsylvania Herald*, which carried laudatory letters to the editor about the large number of new voluntary associations that seemed to be springing up everywhere. One correspondent called the citizens’ movement “a great leap forward in humanity.” The new associations included a society for the gradual abolition of slavery, a society for the promotion of political inquiries, a society devoted to the medical relief of paupers, and the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons.

It is important not to forget how deeply rooted public support for culture, learning, museums, libraries, and colleges and universities is in the early history of our country. The first museum established in America was—and is—the Charleston Museum, founded in 1773 to preserve and interpret the cultural and natural history of Charleston and the South Carolina Lowcountry. The first library was the Library Company of Philadelphia, founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin and a group of his friends—but it was a subscription library; individuals had to buy “shares” in the library

in order to borrow books. The first publicly supported municipal library that allowed people to borrow books was the Boston Public Library, established in 1848, though there were other libraries opened in the American colonies as early as the 1600s. Education, of course, has also long been publicly supported in our nation. Chartered in 1789, the University of North Carolina was the first public university in the United States to award degrees. In fact, the university was anticipated by a section of the first state constitution drawn up in 1776 directing the establishing of “one or more universities” in which “all useful learning shall be duly encouraged and promoted.” State support, it directed, should be provided so that instruction might be available “at low prices.”<sup>153</sup>

Today, philanthropy continues to be a unique hallmark of our nation and our people. The most recent results reported by Independent Sector in a 2001 survey of giving and volunteering show that 44 percent of adults volunteered and 89 percent of households made contributions. Taken altogether, in that one year alone, these voluntary efforts translate into \$239 billion in gifts and nearly 15.5 billion hours of volunteer work. Indeed, philanthropic giving is increasing, rising by about 5.5 percent in 2005 over the previous year.<sup>154</sup> This generosity, in part, helps to support the nation’s more than 4,000 colleges and universities, its 17,500 museums and over 117,000 libraries, including 9,000 public libraries.

What is perhaps most heartening about American philanthropy is its nature: it is a diverse tapestry woven from the contributions of individuals, families, corporations, foundations, nonprofit organizations and institutions, as well as others. It also transcends classes,

ethnic groups, races, and ideologies and, in doing so, is truly representative of our nation’s pluralism and deep-seated independence. Alphabetically, organizations supported by the public and dedicated to the public good range from Accountants for the Public Interest to the YWCA. It is this kind of public spirit and a belief in each other that we must look to for the antidote to the cynicism that so often, nowadays, seems to be invading our national life.

Indeed, philanthropy without optimism, without faith that solutions to problems can be found, without faith in the future, would be impoverished and diminished. This is especially true nowadays, when our society is rampant with corrosive cynicism. (I can understand the benefits of skepticism, but not cynicism—just as I can understand agnosticism, but not nihilism.) Cynicism offers no help for dealing with the myriad issues we are facing as we move forward through the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In an increasingly globalized society, unfortunately, there are no longer “isolated problems” that are confined to one continent, one region, one country alone. What happens to people anywhere eventually affects all of us. We are not and cannot be isolated islands.

I remember having read that our nation is a potentiality, which is always in a state of becoming. The outcome of that process depends on the nature and commitment of our participation as citizens. As Andrew Carnegie pointed out, as citizens, we have an obligation “to do real and permanent good in this world,” which is also what he hoped to do—and wanted the Corporation to do—in carrying out his philanthropy. Sometimes, for both people and institutions, such efforts require taking stock, aligning our goals with our resources, and reinventing ourselves. Libraries and universities are in a continual state of refining and reimagining

153 The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: <http://www.unc.edu/about/history.html>.

154 Since 1995, this number has either risen or held steady.

their work, which is part of what keeps them so vital. So are philanthropic organizations.

No institution can afford to simply bask in its past accomplishments. One must always be prepared for change and keep up with it—perhaps even get a few steps ahead. That is certainly the case with Carnegie Corporation of New York. We have a long tradition of meeting the challenges of the times. That is why, concurrent with writing this essay, over a year-long period, we embarked on a process of refocusing and reorganizing our programs and structure in order to reenergize our institution—a process that will be familiar to most evolving institutions. One of my favorite authors, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, in his book *Love in the Time of Cholera*, speaks of the conviction that human beings are not born once and for all on the day that their mothers give birth to them, but that life obliges them, over and over again, to give birth to themselves. All during its history, the leaders, staff, and Trustees of Carnegie Corporation have understood the wisdom of that idea and embraced it.

While renewing our vision for the work of the Corporation and updating our plans, we remain mindful of the fact that as a foundation, while we are a source of support for those organizations whose mission advances the spirit of Andrew Carnegie's concern with advancing and diffusing knowledge and understanding, we are not the primary actors carrying out this work. We can provide assistance, even inspiration, in convening like-minded groups and organizations and in coalescing their efforts, but the successes they achieve are their own. We are in the business of helping to build leadership, but it is the leaders and institutions we support who are in the business of making change happen. In providing that support, the benefit to the Corporation is that it remains contemporary

and relevant. As proud as we are of Carnegie Corporation's great heritage, our sights are set on the future. We understand how important it is to be forward looking and strategic, rather than paralyzed by the burden of the past.

The freedom and the ability to reconstitute our work and our goals is one of the great gifts provided by our founder, and we are grateful to him for his remarkable foresight. Andrew Carnegie's mandate is broad enough to be always timely. And the two major concerns that he devoted himself to—international peace and advancing education and knowledge—still remain great challenges to our nation and the world. International peace is tested day after day by competing national interests, globalization, nationalism, religious fundamentalism, competing ideologies, poverty, demography, migration, the rise of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, competition for water and for energy, challenges of health care, as well as the impact of environmental changes on the economies and well-being of literally every society. Education is still the crucial element in meeting all of the above challenges. It remains a liberating force and an unmatched instrument of economic and social progress as well as, one hopes, a bridge of understanding and peace that links all of us together.

The Corporation is not alone in emphasizing the need to see the world as it is today as clearly as possible, and to respond. Indeed, foundations as a social force and as engines of progress have an increasingly important role to play in maintaining the health and strength of our civil society, which in turn is an essential ingredient of our democracy—but also of our global society. In the United States, at least, the magnitude of the economic and social impact of foundations is enormous, as is their contribution to public life. In 2005 alone,

U.S. foundations provided over \$30 billion in grants, a figure that will only increase in the years to come.

I believe that foundations are here to stay. They are one of the great cornerstones of American philanthropy, which, as Susan Berresford, president of the Ford Foundation so aptly put it, “refers to altruistic concern for human beings and assistance to advance human welfare. It encompasses a spectrum from charity that addresses suffering, to the strategic use of resources for addressing root causes.”<sup>155</sup> Let me add that increasingly, foundations also draw strength from their diversity and their ability to reconceive how they do their work and carry out their missions. That does not mean that they are in the “fashionable idea” business—not at all. Throughout changing times, what remains constant about foundations is that they are in the knowledge and service business—hence, in society’s business. Indeed, all three cultures that have been highlighted in this essay—libraries, universities and philanthropy—are the gateways to knowledge, preserving, generating, modeling and disseminating what human beings need to know in order to renew themselves and their societies. They are the bridges that cross any and all distances to connect us to the rest of the world. And as such, these institutions are, and I believe will remain, the building blocks of the future. As Americans, and as citizens of the world, we are indebted to all of them and to the generous and creative spirit of those who have dedicated themselves to improving our society and the world we all share.

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<sup>155</sup> “Remarks by Susan V. Berresford at Duke University’s Fuqua School of Business,” February 6, 2007.

