

CHAPTER 3
OVERLAPPING INTERESTS AND
CONFLICTS OF AUTHORITY

Trustees and President

WHILE the trustees undoubtedly have the entire institution under their control and can take action on any matter, it is with few exceptions most unwise for them to act on any detail of appointments or administration. The president is their executive officer. It is his duty, and he should be entirely capable, to handle all the detail of administration. Any encroachment on his authority in detail by the trustees usually makes serious trouble. Trustees are frequently asked for appointments to the staff or for college business. All such requests should be referred to the president without recommendation. The trustees should confine their action wholly to determining policies and controlling the finances. If the president does not administer the college acceptably, his resignation should be called for, and a new and acceptable administrator should be appointed.

In some cases the president arrogates to himself authority that belongs to the trustees, and here again trouble results. Certain decisions about the physical plant, the campus, and the design of buildings, letting of contracts, and construction of new buildings definitely belong to the trustees. The president on his own authority sometimes decides matters of this kind contrary to the ideas of the trustees and puts himself in an embarrassing position. Occasionally, a president announces a new policy which has not been approved by the trustees, and if it is questioned by them either the trustees must acquiesce or the president must withdraw his announced policy, with resulting embarrassment.

It will save much misunderstanding if the president keeps the trustees fully and promptly informed about all developments of any interest at the college. It always annoys a trustee to receive the first news of an occurrence of which he should be informed, from an outsider, or through the columns of a paper. The president and trustees should always be in complete accord.

The President and the Faculty

In order to understand the friction which sometimes occurs between the president and the faculty, it is necessary to consider the development of our institutions and the difficulties that grew as their size and complexity increased.

Prior to 1875 the president was usually the only officer, and the faculties were small. With very few exceptions faculties numbered less than thirty, and expenditures outside of faculty salaries and fuel were very small. No laboratories existed. All business of every kind was settled around a table at which the faculty members sat under the president as presiding officer. All business was determined by a majority vote, and everything was most democratic.

As institutions grew and developed this procedure broke down. Students and faculty grew to unwieldy size. Business increased in amount and complexity. Business officers, a registrar to handle records of grades and degrees, and deans to deal with students and educational detail, were appointed to assist the president in handling his growing problems. While faculty members did not wish to devote more and more time to administration, they were reluctant to see less democratic methods prevail. Today most friction between the faculty members and the president is due to a feeling on the part of the former that the president has acted autocratically in one or another matter without duly consulting their advice.

We now have institutions with over 2,000 instructors teaching over 15,000 students and with annual expenditures of

over \$10,000,000. With the multiplicity of matters for decision, it is increasingly difficult to always consult with faculty members and carry on in a democratic manner.

However, some things can be done which go far toward satisfying the faculty in these matters. How far these policies can be carried out in any institution must depend on the decision of the president and trustees. The following policies would generally be very acceptable to faculty members.

1. Authorize the faculty to elect by ballot a committee on committees, which will nominate members of all committees of the faculty.
2. Authorize the faculty to elect by ballot a small committee on administration to represent the faculty in all or part of the following matters.
 - a. To take up any matter concerning a member of the faculty with the president.
 - b. To consult with the president on any administrative matter including the budget and salaries.
 - c. To represent the faculty in a joint committee of trustees and faculty in the nomination of a new president, when that office becomes vacant.
 - d. To meet with a committee of trustees of equal size to discuss common problems.
3. The faculty of each college desires the privilege of electing its dean, or participating with the president in the selection.
4. All members of the staff appreciate easy access to the president's office to discuss with him any matter they desire to bring up. If the opportunity is wide open the number who take advantage of it in any year is not great. However, deans and department heads usually disapprove of such direct easy access, except for themselves, and insist that all matters go to the president through them. It must always be difficult to choose between the advantages of each plan.

The president is daily pressed with unanticipated problems,

all calling for decisions. Usually matters come to him only because they are beyond the authority of minor executives. Most of these matters are within his authority and clearly under policies fixed by the trustees and properly call for his decision. Among 100 such matters there is always a number which should best be referred to a department, to a faculty, or decided after conference with one or more professors. In the press of many matters, the president himself acts on some really calling for faculty reference or consultation, before he thinks of the desirability of faculty consultation, or he is pressed into a quick decision by circumstances. Each such failure to consult faculty opinion before action, is called autocratic and results in criticism of the president. Usually, the president throws himself open to the charge wholly without intention. However, every such occasion is unfortunate, and the wise executive will err on the side of consulting the faculty too much rather than too little.

It is vital that the president and trustees remember that every faculty includes a large proportion of members who know vastly more about their respective fields and matters relating to them than their board or president. These men rank high among their professional associates in the country. Their opinions are highly esteemed by their equals. They cannot but be astonished and hurt when matters which touch their interests are decided without themselves being consulted.

They feel that they constitute the essential part of the institution—the teaching staff. They and the students *are* the college. If they are regarded and treated as hired men, employed to do a task and to be dismissed when it is done, they resent it. Unless they feel that they are taken into full cooperative fellowship by the president and trustees, are regarded as fully worthy of confidence, and are consulted largely on all plans, they cannot be happy in their relations or do their best work.

This does not mean that college professors are temperamental, or especially sensitive. It is simply the nature of the enterprise. If, in a given institution, a professor is not vitally important in all matters bearing on his field and work, he is not important at all, and the position does not attract him.

In general it may be safely concluded that those institutions in which the faculty members are happiest and most contented in their work, render the finest service. One important basis for such contentment is the feeling that their opinions in the fields of their interests are esteemed and sought by the president.

Two matters may properly be enlarged upon here, as each of them frequently causes much unrest and discontent among faculty members.

The Appointment of Deans and Department Heads

The method of these appointments varies with the institution. In the most democratically administered the deans and department heads are elected by the faculty. In some institutions these appointments are made by the president and trustees without any consultation with the faculty. Between these extremes middle courses are followed, where the president, after more or less consultation and advising with the faculty, makes these appointments.

For these appointments to be successful the appointees must have the full confidence of both the president and trustees, and of the faculty members under their jurisdiction. To secure such confidence on both sides close collaboration between the president and faculty is essential, whether the initiative is with the one or the other.

Any faculty ought to have members on the staff capable and suitable to fill these posts. When appointments can be made advantageously from staff members, it is usually simpler to secure general approval. When it seems necessary to bring

in men from outside it is both more difficult to be certain the appointee is the type of man desired and also to secure general satisfaction with him.

It is certainly desirable to consult the faculty members concerned fully, or to turn the initiative over to a faculty committee on which the president or dean sits as a member.

Honorary Degrees

Most institutions confer a few honorary degrees each year on distinguished citizens whom they wish to recognize. It is the privilege of the faculty to nominate the recipients of these honorary degrees to the trustees who have the final approval or disapproval.

All degrees in course are voted by the faculty and are concurred in by the trustees as a matter of form. Honorary degrees are different inasmuch as they are conferred wholly in honor of past services and accomplishments of the recipients. Occasionally trustees are inclined to press the names of men for honorary degrees from personal friendship or in an endeavor to secure financial aid for the institution. In no case should a trustee go further than to suggest the name of a candidate to the faculty, with whom the formal nomination lies.

Honorary degrees should never be conferred to win favor. They should be conferred only on men and women who have won recognition in their professional or public services.