

CHAPTER 10

THE SCOPE OF THE WORK OF AN INSTITUTION

ONE of the most important policies of any educational institution is to determine its scope. This policy should always be carefully and definitely fixed by the trustees and modified by them as circumstances warrant.

The executive is constantly under pressure and temptation to expand and broaden the scope of instruction. Too-ready yielding to such pressure involves the institution in increased expenditures and often in unwise duplication of work elsewhere.

The problem is quite different in the college and in the university.

The College

In a small college probably the smallest possible number of separate departments would be six:

Ancient and modern languages

English language and literature

Social sciences (history, economics, and sociology)

Mathematics and physical sciences (physics and chemistry)

Biological sciences (zoology and botany)

Philosophy, psychology, and education

Here six professors with such assistant professors and instructors as needed could carry the work of a small liberal arts college. Six professors and eight or nine instructors could teach adequately 200–250 students.

As finances and enrollment justified, this could gradually be expanded to eighteen or twenty or more departments, each with a full professor in charge with such associate and

assistant professors and instructors as are needed and can be properly financed. Such an organization might well include the following departments:

- English language and literature
- Modern languages (Spanish, German, and French)
- Ancient languages (Latin and Greek)
- History
- Economics and sociology
- Psychology
- Education
- Philosophy and religious education
- Mathematics
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Biology (botany, zoology, and geology)
- Music
- Art
- Physical education for men
- Physical education for women

The expansion should certainly be cautious, care being taken that the existing departments are strong before any additions are made. Departments should be added in the order in which they will serve the largest number, and most truly serve the students.

It is most highly desirable to have able teachers rather than many teachers. Excellent work can be done in a small college with a ratio of one teacher to fifteen students, and even with one teacher to twenty students. In most cases, with relatively inadequate funds, better general results will be obtained with higher salaries and abler teachers, rather than with more, less able teachers on low salaries. The total available for salaries is always rather closely fixed, and the average salary must always be determined by the number of teachers.

Most small colleges are very sensitive to the competition

for students with large state universities with low fees and a rich variety of courses. They are constantly tempted to enrich their curriculum by adding courses and instructors. No college can compete with a large institution in the variety of courses offered. The chief strength of the college must lie in the intimacy of smaller numbers, in the personal acquaintance of faculty and students in special services to the individual not possible with great numbers, and in such special emphasis as each college may stress, as for example, serving the young people of a particular religious denomination, as at Ohio Wesleyan, or in offering honors courses to very able students, as at Swarthmore.

The whole financial problem of any college largely revolves about the ratio of students to teacher and the number of separate departments maintained. The trustees should be concerned that a sound policy along these lines is fixed for their college.

The University

Under the designation "universities," we are including all institutions encouraging research on a considerable scale and offering graduate work for the doctorate. There are between 75 and 100 institutions more or less properly included here. Their problem is much more complicated than that of the college.

With a few exceptions their work is organized into a group of colleges, so the first question of policy relates to what colleges or schools the institution should maintain. Usually every one of these institutions will have a college of liberal arts, or a college of science, or both. Almost without exception there will also be a graduate school or graduate college. In addition there may be from one or two to ten or more colleges each with a dean and separate faculty. The more usual are law, medicine, theology, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering,

journalism, business and commerce, agriculture, veterinary medicine, home economics, fine arts. Various other schools and colleges may be found in our universities. The wisdom of including all or any of these colleges in a given university system is an important matter for the trustees to decide. A creditable medical school enrolling 250 or more students must have access to a large and well-run hospital. The annual budget will be well over \$200,000 and may be \$300,000 or \$400,000. The country needs a certain number of medical school graduates each year. There are at present 65 four-year medical colleges in the United States. Nine four-year medical colleges are located in Canada. The question of whether to add a medical school and if so how large, with what special lines of research and financed by how large a budget—all are matters of policy vital to the trustees, and the enterprise should not be undertaken unless they are assured that such a school is badly needed, and that they have ample funds to carry it on successfully.

Every university will need to maintain a college of arts and science, to provide basic work, not only leading to a bachelor's degree but giving courses essential to all the other colleges. The desirability of each additional college should be determined on the basis of need and finance. Some of our smaller state universities neither need nor can they adequately finance many colleges. Some colleges, as for example, medicine, can well be left to larger, nearby institutions. Other fields, such as journalism, may be provided for by a few courses in the arts and science college rather than by offering more extensive courses organized in a college of journalism.

Further, some fields of training employ a rather limited number of trained men, and these can be prepared in a small number of institutions; for example, ten veterinary colleges supply the forty-eight states with veterinarians.

The same type of questions arise relative to each department

authorized in each college. Shall a college of engineering offer civil, mechanical, and electrical engineering only, or shall departments of chemical, mining, structural, sanitary, nautical, aeronautical engineering, etc., be added. In each case the first question relates to the real need for the department, and whether, if it is provided, enough students will enroll to justify the employment of an adequate number of capable instructors; whether the demand for trained men in the field is already adequately supplied by existing departments; and whether, if graduates are turned out, they can be placed in suitable positions. Finally, will the budget stand the added expense?

Another question should always be considered. To what extent is it planned to carry on research and graduate work in the proposed department? This is an important question, for significant research and graduate work leading to the doctorate certainly cost money.

The consideration of research and graduate work can very properly be considered in three grades.

Almost any department with competent instructors can and should carry on minor, inexpensive research for the satisfaction and growth of its staff members. Such a department can properly offer work for the masters degree occasionally without appreciable added expense. Such minor research and graduate work might almost always be approved.

If, however, it is proposed to employ professors of recognized research ability and provide them with adequate research facilities, and train students for the doctorate, very considerable expense is involved and should be anticipated.

Research and graduate work can be carried on at a still higher level where the institution seriously endeavors to maintain a department in the very first rank. In each highly specialized field of knowledge, as for example, in plant physi-

ology, atomic physics, municipal government, or labor problems, there are only a very few, perhaps three to ten outstanding men in America, and they command salaries of from \$6,000 to \$12,000. If an institution proposes to rank at the top in any field, it must maintain on its staff one or more of the ablest men in the field. Any notable institution may properly be ambitious to maintain a few distinguished research departments, but only the very richest can maintain more than a few. Six of our strongest graduate schools each offer graduate work for the doctorate in only about 60 per cent of the fifty-one fields listed in "Doctoral Dissertations" and are doing outstanding work in less than half this number. Many of these fifty-one fields could well be subdivided into from two to ten important subfields.

Most institutions entitled to be classed broadly as universities may be offering work in from 50 to 100 departments. It is certainly the business of the trustees to determine in which of the following categories each of these departments is maintained:

- a. Strictly a service department, offering undergraduate courses, but no graduate work whatever and carrying on no specially financed research.
- b. Largely a service department for undergraduate work, but offering work for the masters degree and doing minor research.
- c. Offering undergraduate and graduate courses and training students for the doctorate. Carrying on extensive research work.
- d. Maintaining graduate and research work ranking with the best in America and staffed with one or more of the most distinguished men in the field.

Too often, in the absence of rigid control by trustees and president, all departments attempt to offer graduate work for the doctorate, and much mediocre work is done. Particularly

for the doctorate, distinction comes only from graduating able men who fully maintain the reputation of the institution. It is far better and more useful to maintain truly high grade graduate and research work in a limited number of departments peculiarly suited to the type of institution and its location, than to spread out into more fields than can be financed at a high level.

The trustees are too prone to accept the organization of an institution as it is without question. They overlook the fact that every institution has grown through opportunity, through the enthusiasms of donors, presidents, and trustees; that during weak administrations strong professors have pushed their departments to an unwarranted prominence; and that some departments are weak that should be strong. They also sometimes forget that a college or university is a living, changing organism, maintained to serve a changing society. It is also very conservative and responds to pressures slowly. Every department and college should be constantly scrutinized in the light of current social needs, and the trustees should assure themselves that in each field, support is in proportion to the demand for service. Departments and colleges which cease to be necessary should be discontinued. New departments and colleges for which there is a real need should be established.