

SECTION IV

The Need for Looking Ahead



CHAPTER 19  
COMMON AIMS AND GOALS

AN administration to fully serve an institution, must not only deal effectively with such matters as have been discussed previously, but it must also develop the educational statesmanship to plan for the future on the highest level. College administration is not a thing in itself but a means to an end. To be distinguished it must have clear aims in what it intends to do for each student; also it must be conscious of the relations of administrative decisions to the larger aims of the college. To illustrate the latter point, note that the decision on a minor matter, in its form and in the way it is reached, may be destructive to the democratic spirit of the college. Some modification of the statement of the decision, or of procedure might have attained the same end without any adverse effect on larger values.

To do effective job planning on a high level for an institution the following questions must be faced.

1. What are the common aims of American education, and how far is your institution pursuing these several aims?
2. Has your institution found its own proper level in American education?
3. Are the types of education offered by your institution the types needed by your constituents?
4. How effectively is your institution serving each individual student?

*Common Aims or Goals*

While institutions of higher learning differ greatly one from another, there are a number of aims or goals common to all.

They are pursued with different degrees of zeal. In one institution vocational goals are most emphasized, while cultural goals are of greatest concern in others.

It is important to determine which of these aims your institution should emphasize and whether it is pursuing all the important aims that it should. Nearly every administrative policy has a bearing, directly or indirectly, on the effectiveness with which one or another of these aims is attained. For example, the policy relative to the maintenance of fraternity houses and dormitories bears directly on the social development of the students. The policy relative to the quality of students admitted materially affects the quality and level of the teaching, and of the professional excellence of graduates.

The following may be considered some of the more important common aims of higher education:

*Cultural.* We all share in the heritage and tradition of thought, which it is undoubtedly a prime duty of our universities and colleges to preserve, interpret, pass on to the next generation, and enlarge. In a broad way most of the work of a college is directed to this end. However, in this day of specialization and minute scholarship, these large responsibilities are often lost sight of in the pursuit of detail. Is your college administration intent on this large duty?

1. Is your college so organized and motivated as to enable it to recognize students and staff members of peculiar ability and develop their strength?

Our nation needs leaders who can pioneer in every field of creative thought, in every branch of science; critics and interpreters of our national life; men who can synthesize the progress and thinking of America and point it onward and upward. Men who have such capacities are rare, but one may enter your college as a freshman this year. He may not conform to the usual average standards. It may require special

insight to see promise in him. If such a man entered your college, would he be identified and developed along the line of his strength, or would he be forced into the mold of the average student? Is your college intent on developing the very able, or is it leaving the discovery and development of such men to Harvard and Chicago?

Some college freshmen, while having great gifts and large possibilities, have small taste for and show little promise in the regular courses. What chance is there that such a one will be recognized, and challenged by suitable work at your college, and not dropped out as an unpromising student?

Our most outstanding example of a great man who was a dull and unsatisfactory student from the elementary school through college is Winston Churchill. Formal schooling did not touch him. It was not until he entered the Army in India and began to read widely on his own initiative, that he awoke to serious interests beyond polo. Many other notable instances could be cited where the routine of college, well suited to the average, has failed entirely to recognize or serve the unusual. Is your college on the alert to serve the unusual student?

2. There are certain qualities widely regarded as indicating an educated gentleman—qualities of character, culture, and courtesy. Knowledge in itself seems sterile and barren unless supported by character.

What is your institution doing to give knowledge of, and experience in courtesy and gentleness in living with others?

Does it give each student some knowledge and appreciation of great literature?

Of great art?

Of great music?

Does it give each student some introduction to the fields of knowledge outside the general area of his specialization?

Are the graduates of your college men and women who are easy to live with and pleasant to talk with?

*Vocational.* Our first American colleges were established to train men for the ministry. They all started with a definite vocational purpose. If the roll of the college graduates of 1700–1800 is examined, it will be seen that practically all entered the ministry or the law, with a few entering teaching and medicine. Whatever else a college may do, it always carries a definite vocational responsibility for its students. We like to say today that if we train the student to think he will be prepared for any vocation. While ability to think is vital, a student expects to gain much more in college toward fitting him for a vocation.

Unfortunately, many college teachers have come to regard any type of vocational training as improper and undignified. This is scarcely a productive attitude. Certainly give all the culture and breadth of training and practice in correct thinking to students that is possible, but also prepare them, so far as possible, for their life work.

What is your college doing to prepare its students to earn a living? This can best be considered by stating the different forms vocational training necessarily takes.

1. Preparation to enter the professional schools in theology, medicine, and law, or the graduate school for advanced study in preparation for teaching in college, or research work.

2. Undergraduate professional training in engineering, agriculture, commerce, nursing, pharmacy, architecture, forestry, home economics, fine arts, library science, music, veterinary medicine, and other fields.

3. Preparation for teaching in the grades, or high school.

4. Basic training in cultural and scientific and economic subjects designed to fit a student to enter on an apprenticeship in business or industry.

In an earlier section the placement service of a college was discussed. Its work will be much more effective if graduates are prepared for something. A considerable proportion of the graduates of every liberal arts college will enter graduate

courses in law, medicine, theology, or education, or a graduate school for further preparation to teach in a college. Are such of your graduates as do go on with graduate work prepared for it and successful in such work? Are those who graduate in professional courses offered by your college, successful in the practice of the profession for which your college trained them? If some did not succeed, was their failure due to poor teaching in the college; to poorly organized curriculum; to unwisely training students in a field already overcrowded; or to accepting for admission to the course individuals incompetent by preparation and interest or unsuited in personality? If those seeking to teach fail of employment, is it the result of poor teaching, lack of adequate practice teaching facilities, or of inferior ability or personality of the student?

If the graduates of your college cannot make a living, they can scarcely profit from any cultural training they may have received. A study of the occupational success of each graduate is very rewarding.

*Social.* Our colleges usually claim to develop their students in such a way through study and association with the faculty and with fellow students, that by the time they are graduated they are socially acceptable among educated men. In spite of this claim many college graduates are by no means as acceptable companions as their diplomas would seem to warrant.

Many of the ablest students entering college today, students intellectually capable of serving later in positions of large responsibility, come from homes so limited economically and socially that these young people need development socially to fit them to rise to their best level of service.

Is your institution doing all it should to enable each graduate to live effectively with his fellows?

A consideration of the following questions may help to answer this question:

1. Does your college give all its students some knowledge

of the world and some insight into world affairs. A man can no longer guide his own life intelligently without some knowledge of life outside his country.

2. Do your students acquire at college some understanding of the democratic way of life, of democratic values, and get some experience in democratic living?

Russia and Germany have developed national systems of education designed to effectuate national aims. We do not want a federally guided and controlled education. Our system has developed from the bottom. Starting as the elementary school for pioneers on the frontier, as the frontier moved from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the common school served all, rich and poor. As settlements stabilized, schools improved. High schools developed. All followed a common pattern. All were local in support and control. Our colleges developed in much the same way. They developed in a democratic way. Today we tend to forget much of this. We take freedom and democracy for granted. We forget our past struggles to win them, and that they can again be lost. Our teaching of the democratic way of government has become largely formal and unimpressive. With schools and universities enrolling thousands and counting teachers by hundreds, their administration often ceases to set an example of democratic methods and procedures. We must earnestly endeavor to keep the democratic way of life before our youth, both by vivid precept and example of effective operation.

Is the democratic way of life emphasized in your courses in the social and humane studies?

Is the administration of your college democratic, and is the life of the institution among faculty and students permeated with the democratic spirit?

3. Does the college improve the health and sound physical development of all its students? Does it give all fine ideals of health, physique, and recreation, or does it expend all its



money and interests on 200 major athletes for intercollegiate competition? Does every graduate go out with a sound body and robust health so far as his physical endowments permit? Is his physical endowment as he leaves college all that he will need to render the service for which he has been trained?

4. Does your college fully recognize and seriously endeavor to meet its responsibility to develop high ideals of character, and religion in its students. Do students go out with sound character, and with a religious grounding such as to enable them to meet the trials of life in a way to reflect credit on the college?

5. Do all graduates leave college with a sound rudimentary philosophy of life on which they can build safely as wider experience of life gives them material? Do the content of the college courses, the methods of instruction, and the character and personality of the teachers all tend to help the students formulate a sound philosophy of life? If there is a chapel service, does it make a real contribution to this end? If there are courses in philosophy and psychology, do they make a positive contribution to the building of a sound philosophy of life by the students?

Is your college pursuing the cultural, vocational, and social aims common to all colleges, wisely, and in the best balance for its largest service?