

TAKING CHARGE OF *Change*

RENEWING THE PROMISE
OF STATE AND LAND-GRANT
UNIVERSITIES

Kellogg Commission
On the Future of State and
Land-Grant Universities



June 1996

Dear Colleagues:

The nation's state and land-grant colleges and universities have promised many things to many people and delivered on most of them—world-class research, first-rate service, and access to affordable education for all. They have been a unique source of practical education and lifelong learning, first for farmers and then for just about everyone else. The value of these institutions is beyond calculation. They have kept the promise.

All of that is now at risk. We cannot sugar-coat the truth. Unprecedented problems confront our campuses. We face seismic shifts in public attitudes. We are challenged by new demographics and exploding technologies. We are beset by demands to act “accountably” toward students, parents, communities, and taxpayers. An increasingly skeptical press questions our priorities. It is hard to know where to start or how to begin.

Institutions ignore a changing environment at their peril. Like dinosaurs, they risk becoming exhibits in a kind of cultural Jurassic Park: places of great interest and curiosity, increasingly irrelevant in a world that has passed them by. Higher education cannot afford to let this happen.

We must take charge of change. That is what the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities is all about. This brochure lays out our goals and aims. Our institutions were created to build a better America. That promise beckons us still.

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THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

*F*or state and land-grant universities, times continue to change. Consider a partial list of external challenges:

SOCIETY. Families and communities have weathered staggering changes recently—from jobs and economic security to values and family structure, everything is different.

THE ECONOMY. Battered by global convulsions, the economy is under siege, no longer growing as it once did. For higher education, funding is tight and getting tighter.

TECHNOLOGY. Computers and telecommunications are altering every facet of our national life. As corporations and private vendors enter our world, the concept of the campus itself is under challenge.

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS. A skeptical public appears convinced that students are ignored, that research is more important than teaching, and that we have built a research-driven faculty that knows more and more about less and less.

Internally, the challenges are no less sobering:

ENROLLMENT. In the last half-century, college attendance has ballooned, from roughly 25 percent to 60 percent of each high school graduating class.

DEMOGRAPHY. Our institutions must contend with students from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures. Many are students of color, older, more sophisticated (some less so), and from single-parent homes.

FACULTY. The source of our strength, too many are beguiled by decades of growth, reluctant to shake off old attitudes, and continue to look beyond the campus for their professional rewards.

ATTITUDES. Today's students tend toward electronics instead of literature, images rather than words. They distrust adults and authority and shrug off changes in values that mystify their elders.

Times are changing. As American medicine and corporations learned before us, higher education must change with them.



THE TRADITION OF RESPONSE . . .

*H*igher education is such a constant in American life, so imposing and reliable a force, that it is easy to overlook its long history as an agent of change. It has been incessantly dynamic and responsive, in both form and substance:

- The first colonial colleges set out unambiguously to develop an elite.
- State and land-grant institutions set their sights on democratizing higher education.
- The graduate university arrived in the United States after the Civil War.

- The public research university, a product of a partnership with government, flowered fully after World War II.
- Included in the rich texture of higher education we find community colleges, alternative universities, extension programs, 1890 land-grants, and tribal colleges—all designed to broaden, widen, and deepen access to higher education.

Americans have brought the benefits of a college education to the broadest segment of people in the history of the world. The issue has always been the same—not should we change, but how? What do we need to do to renew and maintain the promise?

Now is no time for the nation to falter in the ongoing adventure of defining itself through higher education.



... AND THE TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

Despite challenges, American higher education still leads the world in access, research, Nobel Laureates, and many other telling indicators of excellence.

Inevitably, success tends to blind us to the need for change in the way we go about our business. Why change anything? The reasons are compelling. To paraphrase Shakespeare's Cassius: We shall change, or worse days endure.

- Maintaining pre-eminence is vital to our citizens, institutions, communities, and the future of our country.
- In the face of complex new problems confronting the nation, our challenge is to meet society's expectation that we will continue providing the first-rate research, service, and access essential to producing the educated populace required in the 21st century.
- Given the complexity and scope of our campuses, we must do a better job of putting our house in order and explaining what we are doing and why.
- We have to address perceptions about teaching and costs. The public believes we have lost sight of the needs of students and that costs are spiraling beyond the reach of most families.

None of us—faculty, presidents, or trustees—can afford to ignore these issues while defending narrow, outdated positions. Basking in the reflections of past glories, we will lose sight of today and risk tomorrow. We have to persuade the American people that we are good enough to lead, strong enough to change, and competent enough to be trusted with the nation's future. In brief, we must take charge of change.



THE COMMISSION AND ITS PLANS

*F*ive issues define a three-year agenda for change:

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE—placing the student experience—graduate and undergraduate, traditional and non-traditional—at the heart of institutional concerns.

ACCESS—maintaining access as a priority, despite financial and political pressures.

ENGAGED INSTITUTIONS—going beyond extension to become more productively involved with our communities.

A LEARNING SOCIETY—creating an America that encourages learning throughout life.

CAMPUS CULTURE—redefining excellence through the prism of this new agenda.

[The ethic of] equal access to education and service to communities remains one of the noble, worthy ideas in American society.

— WILLIAM C. RICHARDSON
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The Kellogg Commission is funded by a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation awarded to the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.

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