13

What of the Future?

It seemed pertinent, in the opening chapters, to review certain aspects of American education in general and of higher education in particular. Although we enjoyed the opportunity to express opinions on "what is wrong with education" —and who does not?—an attempt was made to reach positive conclusions. The purpose of this preliminary discussion was to provide a meaningful background for a study of the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania.

A considerable portion of this faculty are involved in a dual responsibility. They teach in undergraduate colleges within the University (the first two years of which correspond to secondary education abroad), and also guide professional training and conduct research. Only the latter functions are common to universities throughout the world, and we have stated the view that they should take primacy at Pennsylvania as well as in similar American institutions.

Efforts to improve teaching in undergraduate colleges, desirable in themselves, should not be permitted to interfere with a university's prime purpose. Current concern about "college teaching" relates to numerous institutions entirely outside of universities, and there is some danger that it will be carried over into university colleges in an undiscriminating manner. Distinctions should be made, therefore, between independent- and university-colleges, and between "college teachers" and "university professors." Real universities were late in appearing in this country and have never entirely

transcended their quasi-secondary origins. For this very reason, care should be taken that their standards are not diluted from below.

As a matter of fact, American universities still operate under the influence of a lower-school tradition, in that they have taken over the forms of government established in early, rather elementary arts colleges. These forms, which place legal authority in the hands of lay boards and of resident administrators, have proved similar to those used in business organizations. Hence some trustees and presidents, over the past seventy-five years, have viewed the operation of a university as analogous to that of a commercial or industrial concern. The faculties, whose position had long been that of somewhat superior, secondary-school teachers, were consequently in some danger of becoming mere employees.

The outcome of these trends, we think, is that the American university has gained something of the efficiency of a modern corporation, but its faculty has lost—or never achieved—the degree of independence traditionally associated with "a community of scholars."

Against this background, one fact stands out clearly: the academic profession in the United States, and particularly that portion of it identified with universities, has long been a group whose role and status are ill-defined. Unlike lawyers and physicians, its members are neither licensed nor self-employed, nor do they possess any clear-cut code of responsibility or ethics. Even the unity of the profession is somewhat in doubt, in view of the wide diversity of members' interests and of the many types of institutions in which they serve. By and large, however, academic personnel represent an old guild which has been partially fitted in to the forms of business corporations.

Restive in this situation, faculties are more or less desirous

of exercising greater influence within "their own institutions" and over higher education at large. Typical of this state of mind, as it existed at Pennsylvania, was the reference in the *Almanac* (1957) to "the belief that the minimal participation of the Faculty (in policy formation) might appropriately be enlarged to the benefit of the University as a whole." Resulting issues may be submerged for long intervals, but they rarely lie much below the surface in the majority of colleges and universities. The whole situation calls, as Professor Ralph Fuchs has noted, for a systematic and objective study of the academic profession as it has evolved in this country.

Meantime, the procedures indicated for the immediate future are those which will provide greater influence for faculties without jeopardizing the values of competent administration. These latter values should not be minimized by even the most enthusiastic spokesman for the rights of the staff. The future of private universities, in particular, depends on the general funds which can be raised—a matter for which faculties have little or no responsibility. Pennsylvania, to be specific, cannot maintain or achieve excellence unless its staff salaries are raised further and substantially in the years immediately ahead. Fortunately, present administrators are as aware of this need as are faculty members, and have committed themselves to this obligation.

Administrative values, moreover, are not limited to fund raising. Something has been said in preceding chapters of the need for officers, on all levels, who can see things whole, who can deal objectively with personnel problems, and who can provide what is called imaginative leadership in general.

Meantime, enlarging the influence of the faculty at Pennsylvania is not to be thought of merely as a concession to supposed "rights" or even as a means for improving morale —much as it might do in that connection. Rather is such a

policy to be recommended for what it can do for "the benefit of the University as a whole." The policy has already taken the form of "consultative" procedures and should be developed to the point where faculties fully share in major policy decisions.

The expanding role which faculties now play at Pennsylvania seems to have originated in protests which led to the formation of the Senate in 1952. But present administrative officers, themselves academic men, have in subsequent years taken the initiative in encouraging the same program. The response of the faculties to this enlightened regime has been encouraging and argues well for the years immediately ahead.

The future of the University of Pennsylvania is bound up, in its larger aspects, with that of all private, American universities. Within this group, Pennsylvania has successfully maintained its relative position over the past half-century, and much of the credit for this record is due to the faculty—individually and collectively.

This record, creditable though it is, can be and ought to be bettered. The University has now served for over two centuries as the chief center of learning in one of the major metropolitan areas of the United States. It has a proud tradition, as having been the first institution of higher education in the nation's former capital, the first to secularize such education, and the first to take a step—the founding of its medical school—toward the creation of a university in this country.

Yet today, after two centuries, Pennsylvania just misses rating among the nation's ten strongest universities. It is close enough, nevertheless, to make realistic a determination to attain this superior status—this true excellence—in the reasonably near future. The effort needed to reach such a goal

will be great, and success will not be assured. Community and alumni support must be increased and forward-looking policies adopted. Trustees and administrators must undertake much of this program and one may now have every confidence they will not set their sights lower than the best.

The immediate means to excellence will of necessity be provided by an ever-improving faculty personnel. Careful selection and promotion, the provision of adequate funds and facilities, and a mutual sharing of policy decisions between administrators and staff will make for a strong and loyal faculty. From such a point on, an institution strengthens its own momentum and morale. A faculty of this calibre, meantime, will enhance the University's reputation and so, in turn, encourage further general support. These are the goals, we believe, towards which the University of Pennsylvania is moving.