

D A T E L I N E

2000

The New Higher
Education Agenda

DALE PARNELL

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One of the central messages of this book is the advancing impact of technology on American enterprises. To show that we practice what we preach, this book has been produced entirely on Apple Macintosh desktop publishing equipment and programs instead of through traditional typesetting procedures. —*D. P.*

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A nation is never finished. You can't build it and then leave it standing as the pharaohs did the pyramids. It must be re-created for each generation by believing, caring men and women. If we don't care, nothing can save the nation. If we do believe and care, nothing can stop us.

John Gardner

Foreword

Drawing on his nearly forty years of experience in education, Dale Parnell has brought to the forefront the challenges facing our educational system as we move into the twenty-first century. He also has provided an array of workable solutions.

Parnell identifies the environmental, societal, and demographic changes that will confront us in the 1990s and the human development needs these changes will create. Higher education's contribution to America's future economic prosperity, he says, will be to educate, train, and retrain the emerging workforce at all levels.

Three paramount needs emerge from this discussion: to increase minority participation in higher education, to better educate the "neglected majority"—the 65 to 75 percent of high school students who will not likely pursue a baccalaureate degree, and for college and universities to give priority attention to the outcomes of the higher education experience. All of these needs have been recognized by the higher education community as top priorities and Parnell details how these goals can be served by partnerships between higher education and the communities it serves.

Parnell identifies economic development as a key community service for many colleges. In the future, communities will call on colleges more frequently to help solve economic problems, conduct economic surveys, train and retrain workers, and share facilities, equipment, and professional staff. Successful partnerships between colleges and their communities already exist, and Parnell provides useful descriptions of how several of them work.

He also reiterates the importance of establishing partnerships between two- and four-year institutions to enhance minority and low-income student participation in higher education through transfer. Coherent college transfer agreements, coordinated academic calendars, common course credit systems, and sequential curriculum planning for all institutions are some of the mechanisms that can be developed to improve the articulation process.

FOREWORD

Dateline 2000: The New Higher Education Agenda helps us focus on the opportunity we have to help the disadvantaged and undereducated reach higher educational levels. Parnell predicts the passage of new federal initiatives designed to solve problems facing urban America—plans that would bring higher education into partnership with city governments, local communities, and the federal government.

Technological advances will require colleges, universities, and secondary and elementary schools to work more closely in what Parnell terms “the search for synergy.” Liberal arts and technical education will become more integrated, he says, to help develop flexible, well-educated, and technologically competent individuals.

This book issues a challenge to colleges and universities of all kinds. The strength of their leadership, combined with their ability to define a clear and attainable mission and to develop partnerships with their students, faculty, alumni, governing boards, and communities, ultimately will determine whether higher education can meet the needs of a changing America in a changing global society and economy as we move into a new century.

The imperative has never been greater for those of us in higher education to move beyond the boundaries of our campuses and into the community to educate those populations that will comprise the majority of our society by the close of the 1990s. This important new volume provides us with a road map and guideposts to measure our progress.

Robert H. Atwell
President
American Council on Education

Preface

In the course of collecting information for this book I have talked with hundreds of people in education, government, business, labor, finance, and think tanks, including former presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford. I find a surprising amount of cautious optimism about the future. Certainly, the optimism is not even, and is tempered by many of the tough problems of poverty, terrorism, urban and inner-city challenges, drug problems, environmental problems, and educational problems. But despite these sobering challenges and the pain involved in solving, or even partially solving, these perplexing problems, a cautious optimism about the future, particularly for higher education, seems to be emerging.

In the chapters that follow I have attempted to analyze some major external forces that will fuel a new education boom and impact higher education institutions of all kinds in the 1990s. No attempt has been made to be inclusive. As an example, environmental challenges remain unexamined. Certainly, the rising cost of cleaning up the environment and maintaining water quality and supply will be large issues in the decade ahead. The terrible drug problem facing our country has not been examined in this analysis, but higher education institutions have a heavy responsibility to help stem the tide of substance abuse on and off campus. The rising tide of college faculty unionism and the challenges of making the collective bargaining process work within the academy have not been discussed here. These and many other issues have been left for others to explain and analyze.

An attempt has been made in this book to forecast for the future of higher education based upon an analysis of the overarching forces that are, by and large, external to colleges and universities of all types and sizes. As an example, the link between the economy, education, and human resource development is solid and becoming more important every day. It is an umbrella external force that will impact all education institutions regardless of mission.

PREFACE

Nothing written here will be a guarantee for the financial or educational health of all colleges and universities. Some institutions will do better than others in the new technological environment. But all U. S. institutions of higher education will be offered more opportunities in the 1990s than ever before. There are rich possibilities, as well as hazards, ahead for those colleges and universities that respond to these opportunities in dynamic rather than static ways.

The leaders of higher education institutions are urged to utilize this book to expand the dialogue about how the future will impact their college or university, and to initiate the dialogue where it has yet to begin. This book is intended to be a resource for helping guide these discussions.

Even though the opinions expressed in this book are my own, a large number of individuals deserve thanks and recognition for their suggestions, research, and critical comments.

Special words of appreciation go to the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges Board of Directors and the executive staff for the inspiration and for allowing the author the time away from the office to complete the writing.

Dan Savage, private entrepreneur, and Jim Flanigan, information officer for the Peace Corps, made many early suggestions and helped with some of the early research. Jim Murray, director of publications for the American Council on Education and manager of the ACE/Macmillan Series on Higher Education, made many invaluable suggestions. Elaine El-Khawas, vice president of the American Council on Education, provided much background material and information. A special word of thanks must go to Robert Atwell, president of the American Council on Education, for his encouragement and for writing the foreword.

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PREFACE

I am grateful to Lela Sallis, who translated the writing into manuscript form, and to Mark Winter, who helped edit the book with unflagging care and understanding. Special appreciation is expressed to Diane Eisenberg for coordinating the editorial and artistic services in the production of the book.

Dale Parnell
President
American Association of
Community and Junior Colleges

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Chapter I

Opportunities and Challenges

The future cannot be feared . . . it is the only future we have, so we had better figure out how to deal with it!

Gerald Baliles
Former Governor
Commonwealth of Virginia



You are invited to step into what well could be the most important decade of human history—the 1990s. It is the end of a century, the end of a millennium, and the end of many aspects of our current way of life. The 1990s will introduce us to the new age of technology, the new learning age, and it will bring rich possibilities as well as challenges for colleges and universities.

What follows is a look ahead into a decade that portends to be the most promising, but fast-moving and unsettling, ten years in memory. As the old saying goes, “If you can keep your head while all about you are losing theirs, you simply do not understand the situation.”

In one brief lifetime this writer has gone from cow chips to potato chips, to computer chips, to nanochips. Over the past fifty years the U. S. has experienced enormous upheaval and absorbed turbulent changes. We have had a major war, where we introduced the atomic bomb to the world, and two other wars of considerable magnitude and pathos. We have experienced turbulence on the college campus, a social revolution in mores, a civil rights struggle, antitax revolts, and a flood of new individuals, particularly females, into the labor force and into higher education. We can now travel faster than the speed of sound, including travel into space, and experience instantaneous visual communication around the world. We have become a global community in terms of trade, travel, and telecommunications. The computer is revolutionizing the publishing industry, the defense industry, the financial world, health sciences, and basic manufacturing.

Who would have forecast these developments fifty years ago, or even two or three decades ago? But the astonishing fact is that our country has experienced all of this in real-life living color and our system has not collapsed. Our political, economic, and educational institutions have a certain resiliency to be able to bounce back from trouble and adversity.

DATELINE 2000: THE NEW HIGHER EDUCATION AGENDA

When one weighs the evidence on all sides, it appears that the U. S. is on the edge of a major period of economic growth and technological expansion, which will be fueled by education. Publisher Austin Kiplinger states the case this way in his book *The New American Boom*:

In 1925 Calvin Coolidge said, "the business of America is business." Today, I say "the business of America is EDUCATION." Education constructs the foundation of technology, and technology in turn provides the track for industry and commerce to advance into the 21st century. . . . Evidence is mounting that the U. S. economy, in the 1990s and extending into the 21st century, will raise American living standards to new high records for U. S. consumers and will increase the American share of business in world markets.¹

The decade of the 1990s will be a decade of challenges, but promises to be a boom period for higher education. The road to the year 2000 will not be free of potholes and regional problems, but scientists, engineers, and business leaders are predicting that an education-based technological boom is on the way that will take off in the 1990s in a steep upward curve.

This new higher education boom will happen in an environment of automation and increased productivity; slow population growth; higher wages for a more experienced, older and better-prepared workforce; better education-training and more opportunity for the unskilled workers; more and better research and new and improved procedures for technology transfer to the marketplace.

When one analyzes American higher education institutions, the startling discovery is the sheer diversity of the enterprise. For example, out of 2,785 colleges and universities admitting freshmen students, some 45 percent, or 1,258, have open admissions, and only about 16 percent are identified as being highly selective, admitting students who are in the upper academic quartile of their high school graduating class. It is necessary to gain some appreciation for that diversity in order to understand why and how the contemporary

higher education system works in the United States. And it does work, primarily because that diversity meets the needs of an increasingly diverse population.

Our democracy can and must work in the face of enormous population diversity. Americans meet that diversity by providing and supporting both open access and quality standards in American higher education. But these twin goals have presented higher education with unprecedented challenges, and indeed working them out has been one of the major challenges of the 1980s. Even though much remains to be done, great progress has been made. But what about the 1990s?

You can stimulate an animated discussion in higher education circles when you talk about faculty tenure, but a glaze moves over eyes when you try to discuss institutional mission, or intergroup human relations or even learning outcomes and value-added education. What Albert Einstein observed many years ago is true today, that this age can be characterized by a concentration upon means and a confusion about ends.

A church bishop was riding on a transcontinental flight. The scientist sitting next to him could not help but observe that the bishop was a religious man. In an effort to make conversation he said, "Bishop, do you know what my religion is? Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The bishop said with a gleam in his eye, "Professor, do you know what my science is? Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are?" This tongue-in-cheek story illustrates the tendency in our culture to oversimplify matters and major in minor issues.

What will be the major forces impacting our nation in the last decade of this century, and where does higher education intersect with these forces? That is the key focus of this book.

What can colleges and universities do to help develop a deeper sense of civic responsibility among our citizens? What is the practical link between the economy and education? How can higher education help the U. S. meet the international economic challenges? How can higher education help millions of at-risk Americans move into the economic mainstream of life, particularly those surviving in a large urban environment? How can colleges and universities

adjust collegiate programs to meet the needs of the new, older college student, or the nontraditional, ethnic minority student?

Former president Theodore Roosevelt once said that a great democracy must be progressive or it will soon cease to be either great or a democracy. That progressive search for access and excellence in education presses on in this country. There is a relentless pressure to improve the quality of American life, and millions of individuals see higher education as the major road leading to a fuller and more satisfying life.

Led by the clarion call to the American people in *A Nation at Risk*, the 1983 report from the National Commission on Excellence in Education, at least twenty-five other major national reports were issued in the 1980s calling for substantive changes in American schools and colleges. Never in history has the public been so conditioned to think seriously about education.

Change in education, particularly higher education, comes slowly, and that may be a blessing. Perhaps slow change gives American education a type of stability that is much needed in a dynamic and changing society. But the flip side of that coin is that educational institutions do not exist in an isolated environment. Schools and colleges are part and parcel of a community, state, and nation. Some may be set apart for certain important purposes, such as church-related schools and colleges, but no educational institution can be immune from the major forces impacting our society. Students are being prepared for life in a technological society and learning age, a life that is becoming increasingly complex, and filled with change.

Edward Bellamy, the nineteenth-century futurist and author of *Looking Backward—2000–1887*, saw a twentieth-century America in transition with free public education, women working outside the home on an equal basis with men, occupational safety, credit cards, retirement provisions and early retirement, and a shorter work-week. Even as Bellamy envisioned twentieth-century changes, so we in the 1990s can glimpse some trends and a time of transition into the learning-technology age. For the leaders of higher education not to see their institutions as related to the gathering forces in this complex and symbiotic world is a grievous error.

It is relatively easy to look backward and enumerate the sweeping economic, political, and social changes that came about as a result of the industrial revolution. It is much more difficult to look forward and outline the coming changes with any degree of accuracy. Yet it is possible to see the tips of the icebergs on the move, barely visible, yet moving with enormous power into the American economic sea. Here is the key question for the decade ahead: Will there be serious attempts to steer these iceberglike forces and convert them to productive use, or just allow them to go where they will, altering or destroying all in the way? Here is a second and allied question: Where and how will higher education institutions intersect with these forces?

One of the problems facing the leaders of higher education is keeping up with the sheer speed of change. This problem can be symbolized by an observation from a General Motors executive when queried as to why GM did not enter into more partnership arrangements with colleges and universities. He replied, "Their speed is deceptive . . . they are slower than they look." To be sure, colleges and universities are developing new attitudes, new organizational structures, better response time, and a host of other modifications to address the speed of change. But some analysis of the forces now moving in our society and around the world should be of assistance in steering the collegiate enterprise toward Dateline 2000.

Since the end of World War II, American education has undergone tremendous change. As an example, contemporary colleges and universities have been transformed from the insulated (and sometimes isolated) halls of learning for young people into more complex and multifaceted institutions serving all ages and a variety of new constituencies. The agents of change—population demographics, economic policies, changing social mores, international economic competition, technological developments, and political decisions—will continue to reshape the form and substance of higher education in the decade ahead. But how will colleges and universities respond? Are there major restraints that will inhibit the ability to respond?

When college presidents and other leaders in higher educa-