

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

# INSTITUTIONAL PURPOSE

The original purpose for which an institution of higher education has been established may be found carefully phrased in some formal document or legislative act. The effective purpose, however, can only be discerned after years of operation. It is to be found in the minds and hearts and conduct of several generations of those entrusted with the direction of the enterprise, and it often provides that sense of high importance and dignity which powers its members through all the years to heights of achievement and a profound sense of personal satisfaction.

Sometimes the original intent is so broad that the practice never quite catches up. The University of Michigan of today is probably still somewhat short of Judge Woodward's concept of a "University of Michigania," which was truly universal in scope. On the other hand, and this is more usual, an institution may outgrow its original purpose. Michigan State University, for example, legally established just six years after the Normal as an agricultural college, has grown far beyond its original function. The role of the University of Wisconsin found expression some 40 years after its founding when President Bascom said that "the University of Wisconsin will be permanently great in the degree in which it understands the conditions of the prosperity and peace of the people, and helps to provide them." Of Cornell University's original concept, "the idea of an institution freed from obligation to religious or political or social prejudice, and devoted to the advancement of knowledge in all fruitful fields of inquiry," its historian, Carl Becker, could say after 75 years that "there is nothing we could wish to add to it, or anything we could wish to take away."

Normal's experience was that of possessing a well-defined, limited, powerfully-motivating concept that guided its thought and pur-

pose, and roused its enthusiasm for a full century. Then, under the impact of social forces that pulled in opposing directions, its purpose became dulled and diffused. A committee of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, assigned in 1963 to make a special report on the institution, said:

As the first institution of its kind west of the Alleghenies, the Ypsilanti State Normal School had a long and distinguished record in the field and had attained some national distinction as a teacher-training institution . . . Its graduates, the faculty and its supporters in the State took justifiable pride in its accomplishments, and in its position of local and regional prestige in its special field. Beginning with its conversion to a multipurpose institution but more especially since it assumed the title of Eastern Michigan University, this pride in its past accomplishments and status as a teacher-training institution became less secure.<sup>1</sup>

Under the Michigan Constitution of 1835, which instructed the legislature to provide for a system of common schools, the Legislature of 1849 passed "An Act to establish a State Normal School."<sup>2</sup> Its threefold purpose, the major one of instruction in the art of teaching, and the minor ones of instruction in the mechanic arts and the arts of husbandry and agricultural chemistry, and in the legal basis of citizenship, was reduced to two when, in 1855, the legislature established the Michigan Agricultural College.<sup>3</sup>

For more than a century Normal operated under this legal directive, its administrations and faculties accepting their mission with enthusiasm and a sense of high importance. Meanwhile, three other normal schools were established—at Mt. Pleasant (1895), Marquette (1899), and Kalamazoo (1903). Then, in 1927, their desire to abandon the name "Normal" as connoting an institution inferior to a college brought legislative action. Henceforth, they were known as teachers colleges.

The institution at Ypsilanti, however, which had long since achieved college status, proud of its pioneering past under a name that had become nationally known and respected, clung to "Normal College."

In 1941, the three "Teachers Colleges" persuaded the legislature to change their names again, this time to "College of Education." Normal retained its designation.

By 1955, the pressure of the post-war avalanche of G.I.'s, who sought not only a college education but preparation for admission to

a wide range of professional programs and schools, broadened the curriculum still more, and the legislature was persuaded to drop the term "Education" and designate the three schools simply as "College." With the elimination of this term, and no accompanying legislative definition of function, the colleges could now avoid to some degree the emphasis on teacher preparation. One must reluctantly observe that the move was dictated by a prestige factor that reflected under-valuation of the teaching profession by the society that supported it.

This time Normal, too, was caught up in the change. Its time-honored and nationally respected name was abandoned, and in its place came a faceless title referring to geographical location only—Eastern Michigan College. The geographical reference itself was a denial of a long and proudly-held belief, doggedly clung to long after the necessity for sharing the territory with three similar schools arose, that Normal was not a regional institution but served the entire State. Unlike its three sister institutions, which were created by legislative enactment, Normal had been established by the State Constitution and its purpose was therein defined.<sup>4</sup> To satisfy the Constitution, therefore, in changing Normal's name, the legislature of 1955 re-stated the constitutional purpose. Thus, the statute read:

The state board of education shall continue the normal college at Ypsilanti . . . under the name of Eastern Michigan College after July 1, 1956. The purpose of the normal college shall be the instruction of persons in liberal arts, the art of teaching, and in all the various branches pertaining to the public schools of the State of Michigan.<sup>5</sup>

Four years later the final step was taken. Eastern Michigan College, along with two of its sister institutions, was designated as a university. Again the legislature referred to function and purpose. The statement of 1955 was repeated.<sup>6</sup>

In the revised Michigan Constitution of 1963 the only specific reference to Eastern Michigan University is in the section requiring the legislature to "appropriate moneys to maintain" the several state-supported institutions of higher education. The only reference to purpose is general, applying alike to all levels of public education, expressed by repeating that oft-quoted assertion in the Northwest Ordinance of 1789:

Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.

A legislative provision may well be compared to a theory that has not been put to the test of application. It may or may not work. But in the present instance the legislation expressed so well the deeply-felt need of the commonwealth that it found ready support, particularly in the minds and hearts of those who were to conduct the enterprise. Adonijah Welch, the first to head the school, spoke with feeling at the dedicatory exercises in 1852 when he said:

I receive with deference this commission and these symbols of authority which you have presented . . . It may savor somewhat of enthusiasm, yet in my humble judgment, this day's work will form a prominent item in the history of western progress. This side the Empire State it is the first experiment of similar character made under the auspices of legislative enactment. Who will venture to predict the influence which its success will exert upon the educational interests of the entire Northwest?

A first step, taken as the school opened, was the requirement that every student admitted to the Normal must sign a Statement of Intent.

We, the subscribers, do hereby declare that it is our intention to devote ourselves to the business of teaching in the schools of this State, and that our sole object in resorting to the normal school is the better to prepare ourselves for the discharge of this imperative duty.

Not until 1934, during the Munson administration, was the requirement dropped that, in order to receive the bachelor of arts degree, one must also meet the requirements for teacher certification.

As we have seen, the question as to how much academic work or whether any at all, should be given in a normal school troubled many minds for many years. For a period beginning in 1878, a policy prevailed of cutting academic instruction to a minimum.<sup>7</sup> Instruction in the academic areas was to be left to the better academies, union and high schools.

The ensuing years completely upset this restrictive interpretation of Normal's function. The rapid increase in the number of high schools (promoted by the famous "Kalamazoo" decision of 1872 in

which the high school was legally acknowledged to be a part of the free public school system of Michigan) and the general improvement of their quality eliminated the need for an academic program of high school level at the Normal. At the same time, these factors gave rise to a pressing demand for competent high school teachers, necessitating an academic program beyond the high school level—in other words, of college grade.

In 1893, on the occasion of the World's Fair in Chicago, Normal published a brochure entitled, "The State Normal School of Michigan, its Plan and Purpose." It was issued "in order that the friends of education in America may be informed concerning what Michigan is doing in the professional training of her teachers," and "to aid educators from other countries in gaining an acquaintance with the present condition of progress in American normal schools." A list of specific courses in mathematics, history, English, physical science, natural science, Latin and Greek, French and German was given.

This trend toward collegiate-grade instruction continued. In 1900, President Leonard observed a growing sentiment among the friends of normal schools throughout the country "that the courses in these schools can be materially strengthened on the scholastic and cultural sides without in any sense weakening the professional side of the work. It is becoming more clearly recognized every year that pedagogical training is not a substitute for scholarship and culture, and that the most serious lack of the teaching profession in schools below the high school grades is found in the meager educational qualifications of the teachers in these schools."

In 1916, President McKenny told the State Board that "the growth in the number and the development in scope of the high schools is one of the most outstanding facts in education in the last twenty-five years."

Even as he spoke, he was presiding over a faculty that, on the liberal arts side of the curriculum, boasted men of national repute.

In 1934, the State Board adopted a new statement of purpose. Headed "Purpose and Control of the Michigan State Teachers Colleges," it was drawn by the presidents of the four colleges and printed in identical form in all catalogs. After directing attention to the repeated strictures of the legislature that the purpose of these colleges "shall be the instruction of persons in the art of teaching and in all the various branches pertaining to the public schools of the State of Michigan," the statement continued:

The public school system, less than a century old, has developed from the meager rudiments which satisfied the frontier settlements to the enlarged and complex organization which attempts to meet the needs of today—a day which faces the solution of social, political, and economic problems of fundamental significance. Only honest, intelligent, and well-informed citizens can cope with such problems. Such citizens it is the first duty of our public schools to produce. Only honest, intelligent, well-educated and devoted teachers are adequate to meet these enlarged duties and responsibilities—the day of the mere school-keeper is gone . . . The Michigan State Teachers Colleges, therefore, have always stood and do now stand for two things paramount and inseparable in an institution for the training of teachers.

1. A thorough grounding in such fields of study as may lead to the intellectual growth of the student.
2. A thorough grounding in the science and art of teaching under direction.

Presented at the same time was a detailed statement of the requirements for the bachelor of arts degree. In this program, professional courses in education occupied one-fifth of the total credit prescribed for the degree, the academic areas the rest. Two years later (1936) a Certification Code for teachers was adopted that confirmed this relative emphasis. "Teacher training" had come a long way since 1878; indeed, the term itself no longer suited. The process had become one of "teacher education and training." But the State Board had decreed earlier "that persons may qualify for graduation with a degree without meeting requirements for a life certificate."<sup>9</sup> The gates were flung wide at the normal schools for all who wanted a college education and could meet admission standards, whether or not they intended to teach.

The College maintained its uninterrupted existence during World War II and, from 1945, experienced a flood of veteran enrollments. The anticipated impact of unprecedented birth rates of the late '30's and the early '40's, due to be felt beginning with the late '50's, was preceded by a great swell of national sentiment in favor of higher education. Veterans returning from the war who, at an earlier time, would not have considered going to college even with financial support provided by the "G. I. Bill," now thronged the campuses. Nor were their objectives limited. Many wished to become engineers or be trained for business.

At the Normal College, the statement on "Purpose and Control of the Michigan State Teachers Colleges" appeared for the last time in

the catalog for 1953–1954. No statement whatever appeared the year following. In 1955–1956 there was a new one, “Educational Aims and Objectives.” Following a brief history of the College, it read as follows:

As indicated above, Eastern Michigan College was originally founded to educate teachers. This is still one of its basic functions. To this it has added, over the last half century, programs of instruction in the liberal arts and sciences, and a wide range of specialized and pre-professional programs . . . It is the judgment of the staff and faculty of Eastern Michigan College that the College has not changed its function in its century-old history, but has expanded and broadened it. The additional professional education necessary for the teacher has its counterpart in the other specialized areas for those planning to enter other professions.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of this statement was the blurring of the original function of Normal; perhaps equally important was the dropping from sight of legislative prescription and State Board direction. In any event, it represented the pressures of a new age, carried to Normal’s doors (as to the doors of colleges everywhere) by an undreamed-of hoard of young people who demanded to be let in regardless of their objectives.

No wonder that when, in 1963, the accrediting agency, North Central Association of Schools and Colleges, sent an investigating panel to Eastern’s campus, it found that “a major source of tension in the total situation at Eastern Michigan University is the present indeterminate status of the institution,” and recommended that “the Board of Education or other appropriate board or boards of control of higher education in Michigan should clearly define the functional role of Eastern Michigan University in the ‘System’ of public education of the State . . .”<sup>10</sup>

From the time when the curriculum developed to the college level, it was inevitable that many of the courses offered in the liberal arts would lend themselves to ends other than teaching. Such, for example, was the work in mathematics and the sciences. Students intending to become medical doctors could take their pre-medical work at Normal, then, without remaining to earn a degree, transfer to a medical school. Those planning to enter engineering school could get the first two years of work at Normal. After 1934, permission at Normal to earn a degree without a teaching certificate encouraged the trend and met the tendency of some of the professional schools

(particularly law and medicine) to favor a college degree for admission. Other pre-professional programs developed with demand: pre-forestry, pre-pharmacy, pre-social work. And it was only a step from a pre-business administration program for teachers of business education to a full non-teaching program in business administration and one in secretarial work. From the pre-medical program, it was only a step to a full medical technology curriculum. From the curriculum preparing teachers of handicapped children, it was not difficult to develop a full curriculum in occupational therapy. Thus, by mid-century the school was offering a number of courses that had no relation to her essential function, inviting students who had no interest in teaching.

The demand of the North Central Association panel that Eastern define its purpose could not be easily met. For, although offering a variety of non-teaching curricula, and known by the name of “university,” it was at the same time still essentially a teacher training institution. Between 70 and 80 per cent of its students still graduated with a teaching certificate. Any new definition must still recognize that fact and, along with it, the fact that the need of the State of Michigan for adequately prepared teachers was far from being adequately met.

In any event, one thing was clear—Eastern had in the processes of change lost something that once held great meaning, roused intense enthusiasm and devotion, and gave it a past of greatness. It was the sense of what one might well describe as sacred mission that had inspired one who would later become her president to exclaim, in the course of the first world war:

Why is it, when all the world is warring, Uncle Sam is so calm and patient and unafraid? . . . It is because from Ocean to Ocean, from Lakes to Gulf, he hears the tramp, tramp, tramp of twenty million boys and girls who every morning, rain or shine, set out for the American Public School to conquer the knowledge of the World. That is the largest, the most invincible host that ever marched in any country in all history. The whole globe sways under its footstep.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever direction the new formulation of purpose might take, it would need above all to possess a quality that would grip the imagination and stir the soul of the generations to come if it would adequately replace the old.

In 1964, the Board of Regents asked President Elliot to draw up a

statement of objectives, The resulting document represented the thought of faculty, administration and regents. It was approved unanimously by the Faculty Council and formally adopted by the Board. It read in part:

Eastern Michigan University, even in its earliest years as a normal school, had some of the characteristics of a multi-purpose institution, and over the years it has steadily acquired more. In the future, mounting enrollments which bring to this institution even more students in search of university education rather than teacher preparation will force the University to diversify and expand its offerings still further. At the same time, however, teacher education will continue to be a main concern. These goals are never fixed but evolve with time and with such increase of wisdom as the faculty, administration and governing board may acquire.<sup>12</sup>

The basic philosophy of the University, as approved by the Board of Regents and as it appears in the current catalog, is outlined in these words:

- to provide the quality of intellectual experience that will add meaning, scope, richness, and interest to all undergraduates no matter where they make their careers.
- to provide for undergraduates an education which will equip them to make important cultural, social, and economic contributions to their community.
- to provide for undergraduates education of a quality and scope that will qualify them to enter graduate and professional schools.
- to provide specific education and training to qualify students for careers in business, education, and some technological or specialized fields where the basis for such training traditionally exists or grows naturally from a strong program in the liberal arts and sciences and where there is a need for such training.
- to provide graduate work at the fifth-year level (master's degree) and the sixth-year level (specialist's degree), and further graduate work as the demand arises.
- to cooperate with other institutions of higher learning in meeting needs of adult and continuing education.
- to extend and diversify present programs, including more support for research, as circumstances require and as financial support becomes available, provided that the expansion enriches the instructional program.

