Overview

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My copy of Webster's gives as one definition of the adjective "academic," "very learned but inexperienced in or unable to cope with the world of practical reality." This regrettable but accurate reflection of a language in which "academic" has become a synonym for "irrelevant" epitomizes an important challenge confronting the modern university. Simply put, that challenge is to define and articulate the fundamental purposes and functions of the university in a manner which is understood and accepted both within the academy and in the "world of practical reality" where the academy's patrons and clients live.

One might think that an institution that originated near the beginning of the millenium now nearing its end would long ago have settled the question of what it is for. Not so. We find ourselves today in the midst of vigorous debate about the fundamental purposes and functions of the university. Pundits both academic and nonacademic regularly proclaim their visions of the ideal university, then take real universities to task for straying from the paths of virtue so defined.

Such debate within the academy is not unusual; it is endemic. And so should it be in an institution dedicated to debating principles and issues. Moreover, any institution that means to survive and succeed must constantly reexamine its purposes and functions in light of changing circumstances.

What is notable about the current debate is the extent to which it is occurring outside the academy. Politicians and business leaders publicly question whether universities are adequately educating and training the nation's future work force, or effectively contributing to the nation's economic development. Parents and students ask whether they're getting what they're paying for with their tuition checks. Nearly everybody seems to know what universities should be providing them, and to doubt that universities are doing so.

On one thing, though, there is widespread agreement. It is that universities can no longer set themselves apart from the mainstream of human events, from the central issues of the day. Universities are expected to make important contributions to the solution of nearly every critical problem our society faces. In short, the "world of practical reality" today increasingly demands that universities be relevant, not just academic.

Not all academics find this demand congenial, nor do all universities. That's just fine. One of the glories of the American university is its diversity at both individual and institutional levels. There is good reason for us to continue to nurture modern versions of the medieval monastic community of scholars. But there is equally good reason for us to spawn institutions

committed to intimate engagement with the society they serve. Such engagement is a distinguishing characteristic of metropolitan universities.

Everyone who has experienced "intimate engagement" with another person or with a community of persons knows how difficult it can be to balance the needs of an individual against those of another individual or community. So it is with universities and their communities. How are we to preserve and protect the basic values of a university intimately engaged with a "world of practical reality" in which some of the realities may be incompatible with or even actively hostile to those basic values? Universities are designed to support and encourage those who think. Can they be adapted also to support and encourage those who act?

There are no easy answers to such questions, but they are being actively explored in many universities, nowhere more actively than in the metropolitan universities. In this third issue of *Metropolitan Universities* our authors examine some aspects of the interactions between metropolitan universities and their communities. The term "community" is used very broadly. It may mean the whole of the proximate environment of a metropolitan university, or it may mean some particular element of that environment, e.g., an industry, a school system, a government, or an ethnic or racial group. Not all such communities are treated in this issue. Left to future issues are two modes of interaction of special importance, each requiring sufficiently broad coverage to fill an entire issue. These are collaboration of metropolitan universities with the schools, which will be the theme of our fifth issue, and the role of metropolitan universities in regional economic development, to be discussed in our seventh issue.

This issue begins with a thoughtful article by Jerry Ziegler, who presents a broad framework for the external relationships of metropolitan universities. Ziegler builds his discussion on Cardinal Newman's call for a university to be *both* "a seat of teaching the universal knowledge" as well as an institution committed to "the diffusion and extension of knowledge." Though compatible, these dual tasks also create tensions. Ziegler describes a number of analogous dualities which metropolitan universities must keep in balance. These include the discipline-based liberal arts and the problem-centered professions, individualism and the development of community and public responsibility, the concern with national issues as well as the focus on specific local problems, the potential conflict between environmental concerns and economic development. Ziegler provides, as well, a picture of the metropolitan area, with its central city, its smaller, satellite cities and its suburbs, its industrialized and its rural areas, its rich and its poor. Metropolitan universities legitimately relate to any or all of these dimensions, but, as Ziegler states: "it is the City, writ large, which remains the dominant influence in this society...this country is an urban society and the core meaning

of urban is city. The metropolitan university must be encouraged to assist in the solution of the problems faced by the cities."

In their article, Charles Ruch and Gene Trani provide an overview of the varous ways in which metropolitan universities can interact with their cities, and suggest basic conditions to ensure that these relationships are reciprocal and of mutual benefit. They mention the many modes of instructional interactions, the opportunities for enriching the cultural life of the city and for improving urban health care, the potential contributions to community and economic development, collaboration with schools, and support to local and state government. They draw attention, as well, to the role of metropolitan universities as employers and landlords and highlight the special opportunity of building mutually reinforcing relationships with minority communities.

Such relationships between metropolitan universities and their various constituencies require specific organizational components to link the university with its partners. Furthermore, most of the interactions deal with complex issues and should involve several disciplines and often even different schools and colleges within the university. Hence, metropolitan universities need bridges to the outside as well as links among internal components. Mark Emmert stresses this need, and suggests that centers and institutes can provide ways of bridging the gaps both to the outside as well as within. He describes both the potential advantages as well as the possible problems associated with such entities and discusses issues of structure and control.

Marshal Kaplan provides a detailed description of a specific set of such bridging mechanisms: Centers at the Graduate School of Public Affairs at the University of Colorado at Denver, by means of which the institution responds to needs of state and local governments and addresses national issues, as well. He stresses a number of essential conditions for success and cautions about a number of mistakes to be avoided.

Metropolitan universities have major obligations to collaborate and provide professional services for the highly visible, well-organized components of their communities: government agencies, businesses and industries, school systems, and the like. But the metropolitan environment contains, as well, a variety of constituencies that are less organized and less visible, yet are also in need of technical assistance and professional support of the kind a metropolitan university can provide. Melvyn Colon, Marie Kennedy and Michael Stone engage in a conversation regarding ways in which metropolitan universities can support community development of this kind. They cite specific examples and discuss, as well, some of the difficulties and potential problems inherent in this dimension of community relationships.

Shirley Strum Kenny addresses herself to another basic component of the relationships of metropolitan universities to their communities: preparing the future work force and contributing to the development of future leader-

ship in both the public and the private sector. President Kenny focuses on the special demands as well as the special opportunities created by the multicultural diversity of the students served by metropolitan institutions, and discusses the need to balance one of the dualities mentioned by Ziegler in his article: that of liberal learning and professional preparation. She describes a management and a journalism program at her institution, Queens College of the City University of New York, in which a balanced curriculum has been developed in close collaboration with groups of practitioners.

Health is a major aspect of community life to which metropolitan universities can contribute in many ways. Annette Yonke and Richard Foley focus on one important element: ways in which metropolitan universities that contain a medical school can develop more community-based components of medical training. Drs. Yonke and Foley suggest that a number of medical schools in developing countries have done this very successfully and can provide useful examples of what could and should be done by metropolitan medical schools in this country.

Frank Newman provides a fitting coda for an issue devoted to the relationship of metropolitan universities and their communities. He expresses his sense of urgency, and calls on the academic institutions to work with their surrounding communities in furthering four central issues: minority achievement, the transformation of public education, the improvement of health care, and the promotion of basic values.