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Winds of Change: The University in Search of Itself

This article discusses the role of metropolitan universities with respect to several broad national issues. These issues, it is argued, take precedence over the kinds of local and regional matters that would ordinarily be the subject of university outreach efforts. The conflict between liberal arts and professional education is examined as a constraint on a university's outreach function. The administration of a metropolitan university must make clear its commitment to the mission of outreach. Because it is a new type of university, it should be able to generate new imaginative methods and programs of interaction with the surrounding area.

This article looks at the outreach mission of universities in metropolitan areas from the viewpoint of how these institutions might influence the large social issues affecting our nation. These newer institutions of higher education, which are calling themselves metropolitan universities, may well have a special opportunity to place outreach, or extension as it is known in the land-grant universities, as a mission equally central to the university's purpose as are teaching and research. Several salient characteristics of the academy are described whose influence can determine how the university responds to these larger issues. And possible lines of interaction between the institution and it surrounding territory are suggested. There are innumerable local and regional issues in which metropolitan universities might wish to interest themselves, but this article addresses broader issues facing American society first. Not addressing them makes progress on all the others problematic. If it is justifiable to use the term, *American culture* without being accused of hubris, then the quality of our culture and the success of our society will be judged by how we resolve these broader issues in the decade ahead. We ought not enter the next century in the state of social disrepair in which we find ourselves in 1990. The response of our universities to these issues will be an important indicator of how serious our society is to improve itself.

One hundred and thirty-seven years ago John Henry Cardinal Newman published "Discourses on University Education" which together with a later volume entitled "Lectures and Essays on University Subjects" is known to us as "The Idea of a University," one of the most

prescient and inclusive statements about the nature and purpose of a higher liberal education. The opening lines of the preface state: "The view taken of a university is the following: that it is a place of *teaching* universal *knowledge* (Newman's italics). This implies that its object is, on the one hand, intellectual, not moral and on the other, that it is the *diffusion and extension* of knowledge rather than its advancement."

Newman's emphasis upon teaching universal knowledge may be taken as one of the foundation stones for a curriculum of liberal arts disciplines and the pursuit of theory which has so informed American higher education in the latter part of the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth centuries. The Morrill Act of 1862, which created a new kind of college with a then new and fresh view of teaching the "agricultural and mechanic arts" to a group of students different than those traditionally attending institutions of higher education, was a remarkable development; and the creation of the land-grant colleges, now grown into the large research universities with which we are all familiar, was one of the truly seminal innovations in the history of higher education in this country. But even in those institutions, as in the liberal arts colleges preceding them, the pursuit of liberal learning was always a basic and necessary part of the educational programs offered to students. For all the development of professional schools and the proliferation of courses about the world outside the campus, and for all the continuous debate about the decline of the liberal arts in favor of vocational/professional courses in our colleges and universities, the disciplines of the liberal arts still form the basis of a great deal of what students attempt to learn, whatever course of study they are pursuing. So, *pace*, Cardinal Newman, your influence is still strong.

Newman's other phrase about the "diffusion and extension of knowledge" was particularly prescient about the mission, as it became enlarged from teaching and research, of the great American universities of the twentieth century, especially the land-grant universities. Recall the famous remark of President Charles Van Hise of the University of Wisconsin in 1906: "The boundaries of the campus should be coterminous with the boundaries of the state." Upon that view, happily subscribed to by many others, including the Congress of the United States with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, was built the extension movement which has served agriculture and the farming communities of our country so well. Latterly many urban and suburban regions as agricultural extension evolved into cooperative extension after World War II. Indeed, the success of the extension model impelled many in higher education situated in urban areas to seek its replication in "urban extension." Much of the conversation in the past quarter century about the role of urban universities in connection with their "surround" has been framed by the hope that federal and state money would become available for an urban extension program. Many

downtown, university evening colleges used the forum of the American Adult Education Association in the 1950s and 1960s to lobby for federal support for their institutions' programs. They were reaching a new kind of audience, adults who could only study part-time in the evenings and they reached them with new kinds of offerings, many non-credit as well as credit, and taught them with a faculty who understood the needs and aspirations of part-time adult students from the city and its suburbs.

Now we have the conceptualization, really the reconceptualization, of the urban university into the "metropolitan" university. The question now arises: What should be the proper role, place and function of such an institution with respect to the geographical area of which it is a part? The first two issues of this journal, *Metropolitan Universities*, have sought to elucidate this question by defining what a metropolitan university is. If the term "metropolitan" is useful in describing a set of characteristics and functions attending a certain set of universities, all well and good. In the course of time, if there be truthfulness and distinctiveness to what these institutions are doing, then the term will persevere; if not, not. The important issue is whether this category of relatively new universities can do something different, useful, necessary, indispensable for the different communities which comprise metropolitan areas or regions.

Characterizing the Metropolitan Area

It may be useful to characterize a metro area because it can include several different kinds of populations, very different land use and large contrasts between industrial and agricultural sectors—all of which, in turn, give rise to different kinds of needs and problems and which will require different kinds of treatment by the metropolitan university. As readers will know, "metropolitan area" was a term first used in the 1940 Census to describe what had clearly become a rapidly developing geographical entity, and 140 such areas were so designated. Twenty years later in the 1960 census, the term "Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area" was introduced to describe and categorize various kinds of numerical relationships pertaining to the people and communities of the SMSA. The SMSA had to have at least one central city of 50,000 with surrounding suburbs, again with certain characteristics of density, transportation networks and the like. Today, the census lists SMSAs which abut one another, and in many parts of the country a metropolitan region will have more than one SMSA.

In describing a typical metropolitan area, let us say that it has a central city of 350,000, immediately surrounded by a ring of inner suburbs, followed by a second ring of outer suburbs or "exurbs," followed by unincorporated, often agricultural land. Some of the unincorporated spaces may be directly

adjacent to the central city, may lie between or among the inner suburbs, and similarly with the outer suburbs. Dotted across the unincorporated land, there may be smaller cities, towns, and villages—in short a pastiche of populations and communities. The largest city will often have an old central business district, an inner city, low income, residential area with a non-white population, and a mix of working class, middle income, and wealthier wards or sectors. In many such cities, particularly in the Northeast, Middle Atlantic, and Middle West regions of the country, the wards or sectors will have distinct ethnic communities. But as the post-World War II migration from the central city to the suburbs continues for a variety of reasons, including an increase in economic level, white flight, and a desire in the younger generations for a more "American" status, the suburbs become less ethnic in their composition than the older city wards. These sectors of the city are now a mix of left-behind, older, poorer, European ethnic family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins who do not wish to move from their familiar neighborhoods) and the recently arrived immigrants from all over the world—Southeast Asia refugees, people from the sub-continent of India and Pakistan, from Africa, and larger numbers of Latinos from Central and South America. This extraordinary mix of populations presents the city with a new-old set of problems arising out of language barriers, ethnic and racial tensions, and economic aspirations and competition. In the Elmhurst community in the borough of Queens in New York City, the first-graders come to school from thirty-nine different language backgrounds. Would you like to be their teacher?

Within the metro area, a number of smaller cities will have developed, and indeed we now see many urban counties with blurred boundaries among its cities, towns and villages. Often enough, these smaller cities and towns are competing fiercely with one another for local industrial development, (some examples include the numerous communities of Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island, Cook County surrounding Chicago, Cayuhoga County for the Cleveland area, Fulton County of Atlanta, and Los Angeles County) But at the same time a number of these smaller communities are beginning to cooperate in providing services in the interests of efficiency and economy.

Faculty often fail in their understanding of a community's culture.

The reason for rehearsing this rather well-known typology is to make a simple but important point; if a metropolitan university wishes to be of concrete service to its metro area, its faculty and administration must know how to analyze carefully the different geographical elements, subdivisions, and populations. It is an obvious point but long experience with cooperative extension programs of land-grant universities tells me that those working on outreach, including faculty, often fail to make

such an analysis and fail, therefore, in their understanding of a community's culture. With that kind of failure comes trouble for the university's program, and the recouping or resolution takes more time than an earlier effort to understand.

The analysis of community needs and aspirations is surely complicated. While it may be true that most of us have similar needs, hopes and aspirations, these take different effect in different environments and local cultures. So how does an urban university, now turned "metropolitan," deal usefully with a rural farm and non-farm population at the same time that it interacts with wealthy exurbs, ethnic city wards and people of color? Do size and complexity of a metropolitan area make any difference? Is the metropolitan area old or recent? Does the nature of the local or regional economy affect the university's relation to its area? What is the agricultural-industrial-services mix? What is the nature of local community leadership? These questions must be examined by a metropolitan university wishing to create an effective outreach system.

The University Transformed

In thinking about how metropolitan universities ought to relate to the metropolitan areas in which they are situated, about what ought to be their educational mission and about the reciprocal impact of the metro area on these institutions, I refer again to Cardinal Newman's idea of a university as a seat of teaching the universal knowledge, and of the diffusion of that knowledge. In the almost century and half since Newman wrote, an educated person's view of what constitutes knowledge has expanded beyond imagining. So, too, with the ways in which the university chooses to diffuse knowledge to its constituency.

Let us think for a moment of who and what is included in the constituency of any major contemporary university: undergraduate and graduate students on the main campus; evening school students taking courses for credit towards a degree or for a professional certificate or further professional training or simply for pleasure; a similar range of students at other than main campus locations which may include central city, suburban or exurban sites; the organization of a powerful array of courses, conferences, workshops, meetings, through the evening division or university college, general extension, cooperative extension and industrial extension to all corners of the state or region, or even upon occasion half-way across the nation, for various professional groups, citizen organizations and the like; the interaction of university faculty and other personnel with federal, state and local government through the provision of special courses for advanced training and through the myriad of funding

agencies which are involved in the financial support of university and faculty research; the special relationships of a university's professional schools and colleges with the organizations and associations and business firms of that profession; the assiduous courting of the university's alumni as well as philanthropic foundations for obvious reasons, and finally in more recent years, the reaching out of the university to hitherto unserved or scarcely served groups and individuals, chiefly minority, often low income and not regarded as a university's "natural" constituency. Placing this constituency grid against a map of the metropolitan area reveals just how complex the university's interactions with its many communities is likely to be.

Clearly not every major university engages in all the activities in this list. But what this catalogue describes is the range of involvement by a modern university with the wider society. This modern university was characterized by Clark Kerr as the "multiversity," a term he chose in the Godkin Lectures at Harvard in 1963 (so long ago as that!). Is it not this concept of multiversity which most of us now accept and believe to be correct? That is, it is the *right* concept, it describes not only what is but what ought to be in the relation of the institution to its "surround." In short, there is a kind of moral quality, a required involvement of the university with the larger society, and with its immediate local community and with the several diverse communities of its region. I hasten to add that not every one in higher education subscribes to this view. There are significant numbers of university faculty and administrators who hold that teaching and research are the sole missions of a proper university. Nevertheless, for the land-grant colleges and universities and for the leading private institutions of the country, and for many of the newer publicly supported regional institutions, many of which would be termed metropolitan universities by Hathaway, Mulhollan and White's definition (see their article which introduces the first issue of this journal) it is the requirement of outreach that, added to the missions of teaching and research, has changed the university. I would argue that outreach and extension, have truly transformed the university, and it is not only different but better because the mission of applying research to communities, populations and issues outside the campus improves both teaching and research inside the campus.

Many would argue that the public university has no choice. It must interact with and serve a wider population beyond those who are able to matriculate on campus. It is President Van Hise's vision come alive. But even in those institutions which have made their commitment to extension in its broadest terms, and which place extension equal with teaching and research, there remains a tension, probably on every campus, that must be dealt with if the *university transformed* is to be successful in each of its missions. If not dealt with, the conflict can turn into the delegitimizing of the

one by the other, with difficult consequences for morale and nasty fights over funding allocations.

The Tension Between Liberal Arts and Outreach

If a metropolitan university is to be engaged with its many surrounding communities in new vigorous style, that is with continuous commitment of university resources, there is a further issue that must be addressed. It is the dispute about mission or missions between the faculties of the liberal arts and sciences with their views about the centrality of research and graduate education in their disciplines, and those in the professional schools and the extension divisions who are concerned with professional training, and education, and "outreach." This is no "straw man" issue. It goes to the heart of what the university is and may become. Is the faculty of the liberal arts central to the university? Yes, resoundingly yes. Is it the only unit central to the university? No, not any longer; indeed, not since the end of the Second World War and the advent of Dr. Kerr's multiversity.

The liberal arts are central to the university because by their study students are exposed to some of the greatest works of the human mind and because the disciplines into which we have divided knowledge over the centuries are the basis for studying everything and anything. At the same time, enough of us in the academy also realize that the world is not divided into the disciplines of the arts and sciences and that many of the issues and problems which human beings and social systems confront cannot be approached, let alone managed or resolved, except by going beyond disciplines. Many in the academy have been struggling to discover the right integration of knowledge from more than one discipline, to understand how theory combined with experience might offer better answers and solutions to the problems we face. But going beyond discipline is not a comfortable journey for some of our faculty colleagues and unfortunately many of them are found in the traditional liberal arts units of the universities. Thus we find conflicts among faculties: on the one side, those who hold to the primacy of the disciplines and to rather traditional research and who do not look with much favor on "outreach;" on the other, those in the more professionally oriented units usually with closer interaction with the professions and the world of work. This is not always a clear cut division; there are enough exceptions to render the comment above inapplicable to this or that institution. But a more traditional view of university mission is an obstacle which must be overcome if the metropolitan university is to achieve the purpose of broadened and deepened interaction with the communities of its geographic area. And despite its newness on the academic scene, the metropolitan university will have some faculty who wish only to

be super traditional in order to establish their own legitimacy and status equal to that of the older institutions. So there will be this tension, and it must be addressed, and if not resolved, at least handled directly by those with authority to speak for university administration. The equivalence of missions must be forcefully affirmed together with the proper allocation of resources.

National Issues Affecting All Metro Regions

Having argued that university personnel must analyze their own local, metropolitan and regional communities carefully in order to understand how their institution can be effective beyond the borders of the campus, there are a number of overarching issues facing American society which seriously affect what a metropolitan university, or any university, can do as it creates programs and services for its own area. These issues are of national dimension and scope but clearly they exist in every metropolitan area and thus must also be dealt with at that level. The university cannot escape from them merely by saying a national solution is required. A national solution may be attempted by federal legislation and allocation of funds, but national solutions take effect in regions, states and localities. Furthermore, national issues become national when they are experienced in a sufficient number of towns, cities and counties. The metropolitan university has to be involved in some way because it is part of a community and is itself subject to these influences and conditions.

First, and perhaps foremost, is the tension between individualism and building community. Not a new issue: it is the conflict between equality and the individual's right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the Declaration of Independence and the construction of a united society of laws under the Constitution. Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, first published in 1823, commented on this opposition of individualism to community:

> Although private interest directs the greater part of human actions in the United States, as well as elsewhere, it does not regulate them all. I must say that I have often seem Americans make great and real sacrifices to the public welfare; and I have noticed a hundred instances in which they hardly ever failed to lend faithful support to one another. The free institutions which the inhabitants of the United States possess, and the political rights of which they make so much use, remind every citizen, and in a thousand ways, that he lives in society. (*Democracy In America*, volume 2, page 112, Vintage Books 1945)

But Tocqueville also noticed the effect of succeeding waves of immigration from Europe and the force which the ideas of equality and freedom had

on new arrivals. Every man was every other man's equal; each could pursue his star and would. A democratic society fostered and protected individualism, in contrast to the despotisms of Europe.

This tension continues today with a rhythm of its own. There are periods when individualism and the pursuit of material goods take precedence over public policy. Many would argue that we have been in such a period during the 1980s, and that we are still in it: thus the debate over taxes to provide the resources necessary for social programs. Social programs include not only those public and private efforts aimed at solving a certain class of social problems—housing the homeless, improving the education of poor children, providing health insurance to some thirty million American citizens without it, creating sufficient treatment centers for substance abusers, overcoming welfare dependency, and the like—but also all activities whose purpose is to make us a better society by solving a difficult or important problem. So I include a very wide array of items: the repair of roads and bridges, getting rid of ground water contaminants, strengthening bio-medical research, finding new methods of fueling automobiles, improving nutrition, deepening basic research in the nation's educational institutions and industrial laboratories—and on, and on.

How do we make the public understand the need for public policy? By political leadership, certainly; but pointedly for readers of this journal, by having institutions of higher education accept that education for public responsibility is a necessary and continuous task. This requires rethinking the undergraduate curriculum in order to include civic literacy as a crucial component, no matter what subject a student may pursue. It also requires creating new kinds of outreach programs which, whatever their specific learning objective, includes sensitizing the clientele to the idea of community and to the need for public policy. The new metropolitan university is in a good position to engage this task for it should have fewer old patterns of thought and action as constraints to fresh thinking about both of these endeavors. And it may be, despite the earlier remark about faculty traditionalism, that these newer universities will have more faculty who are seriously interested in creating curricula for civic literacy, producing graduates of their institutions who understand the need for public policy, and working with officials and adults off-campus whose energies are directed at solving society's problems.

Education for public responsibility is a necessary and continuous task.

The second major social issue which universities must examine as they think about all their programs of study is the persistent problem of race in America. Doubtless, it is closely connected to the first issue, for undeniably race prejudice has roots in economic competition among individuals and groups along with the current fissures and angers among and across ethnic

cultures. Although the issue of race penetrates every corner and segment of the American society, in a curious way it is not really discussed. Epithets in a working class bar, stereotypes in the country club dining room, even studies by social scientists in the academy do not serve to get at the deep and persistent attitudes and actions of racial bias throughout our land. Race and politics, race and education, race and housing, race and communities, race and the economy and the changing nature of work are matters which go to the heart of so many difficulties in our society.

Is there a special opportunity for all institutions of higher education to do something about this issue? Is there an obligation? In particular, can metropolitan universities offer fresh approaches, new activities, new programs? Can they use their burgeoning leadership role to bring better thought and better answers? Will they themselves become stronger models of multi-racial hiring. Will they have larger multi-racial student bodies? Will their curricula attend to the issue of race in such a way that their graduates and all others who are reached by the metropolitan university's programs have a different, better, sounder way of thinking and acting about race? Can metro universities contribute to a more peaceful multi-racial society through new outreach efforts?

The purpose of education is to impart knowledge, to help students think clearly about all manner of subjects, to raise questions about difficult issues, to go from what is known to the unknown by scientific experiment, to examine values and deeply held beliefs—in short to expand and enhance the mind so that better trained human intelligence will constantly seek human betterment. The issue of racial prejudice hinders this quest. So any institution of higher education, worthy of the name in my view, must address this issue. To the question, Is there an obligation? the answer is yes.

Metropolitan universities are in a unique position to attend to the issue of race. Their very newness, relatively speaking, should allow a fresh perspective and a more vigorous commitment on how to handle the many thorny aspects of race relations within their own institutions and in the communities they serve. For example, in the development of undergraduate and graduate curricula, one could imagine a faculty group energized by the opportunity to teach all their students about the distinctive nature and history of race in our country, thereby giving students a quite different lens through which to view this issue. One could imagine a metropolitan university reaching for the goal of a truly integrated campus, students, faculty, staff, with different expectations given form by different recruiting policies, different student living arrangements, different administrative practices. In its outreach mission, a metropolitan university, by very specific intention, addresses its programs to issues that involve or include race as a critical factor. It could invite the participation of persons of color in educational programs of special

pertinence to them. More importantly, it could design and organize those programs so as to reach for the objective of an integrated society by new forms of collaboration with citizen organizations, other educational institutions and local government. By these efforts metropolitan universities could offer an interesting challenge and alternative to established extension education.

Third, the conflict between economic development and environmental protection has now penetrated the consciousness of many citizens. We are confronted by environmental degradation which only a short time ago was dismissed as the concern of kooks. But our national penchant for persistent and continuous economic progress runs headlong into this more recently understood goal of perceiving our natural environment. More than a goal of policy, protecting and preserving our natural environment is now seen as a necessity; yet many communities are still following older patterns of thought and action which, it is believed, will bring economic improvement while the environment cost is dismissed or lightly regarded. Every daily newspaper is full of stories about this conflict. What should metropolitan universities do about it or, if they cannot do anything, how should they take account of it?

One way of looking at this problem is to examine the role of technology. It seems clear enough that the American people will not give up economic development. The "rising tide that lifts all boats" is an ingrained concept in our country; and the movement of individuals, families and whole groups from poverty to middle income to wealth has been a part of the social fabric of our nation since its beginning. American social and political institutions have been designed to encourage this basic human aspiration. No politician and no policy contravening economic growth stands a chance: less is less and more is more is a trademark for all politicians. But experts tell us that the nation, indeed the planet, is in danger.

Cutting into this dilemma is the vector of technology. New processes for making things, new sources of energy and ways of transporting people and goods, new methods of growing and using food and disposing of waste, new possibilities for conservation of natural resources of all kinds—these will be the effects of scientific and technological innovation. Universities are directly involved in the basic and applied research that will produce the new technology. All universities can teach about this dilemma, all can help their students understand the conflict between economic growth and environmental degradation, understand what is at stake, and how to balance the demands of society with responsive public policy. Because a metro university can reach to its regional communities, multiple business and industrial groups, many different kinds of citizen organizations and associations, and officials of local government, this issue of the economy and the environment could become a major educational program. It is also the kind of issue that could be treated by coalitions and combinations of institutions. There is an

opportunity for innovative education here. Will the metropolitan universities take it?

Fourth is the double issue of the changing nature of both work and the family. Each could be considered separately but I consider them together because the nature of family structure today is greatly influenced by the economy. The change from an economy based on the manufacturing and extractive industries to one of services and information has been massive and sudden. Our society has not yet caught up with it. Although some of its effects are clear, such as the effect on male breadwinners, this transformation is not well understood. We are only beginning to fathom what new educational and social policies and programs the country needs in order to train the workforce for the next century, and how work and the lack thereof affects family structure. Professor William Julius Wilson's work in Chicago provides us with important insight about the connection between jobs and job training, and black men and their families. Many scholars have been studying these and similar matters relating work and family; and many policy proposals have been suggested dealing with some aspect of work and family, the latest of which, child care and parental leave, was debated by Congress last July. These are not questions which have been neglected. But the changing nature of work and changing family structure have not usually been considered together in university extension programs.

New educational and social policies and programs are needed to train the workforce for the next century.

Other than providing resources for scholars to study the phenomena, what can or should universities do about these immensely complicated interactions of family and work? It is not easy to say. The changing nature of the economy is no doubt very much influenced by what occurs in university laboratories and through the experiments and writings of university scientists and scholars. Scientific knowledge, inventions, and new technological processes based on new theory certainly change the economy. University extension programs provide opportunities for local government officials and citizen organizations dealing with family issues, as well as for those concerned with local economic growth, to consider these questions. But how to create a curriculum and an outreach program that take account of the interconnections between work and family has, so far, eluded most of us. It remains an unexplored opportunity.

Finally, a metropolitan university must look to its central city and the culture and problems of that city. For it is the city, writ large, that remains the dominant influence in our society. No matter the development of suburbs and satellite cities and towns, of urban counties; no matter the movement of populations out of central cities; we are 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 our cities. Many of these problems are part and parcel of the issues discussed earlier. Many will be narrower or more technical. Many, perhaps, will not be affected by what the university can offer. And almost all urban issues are by definition complex and will only be solved or ameliorated by a combination of forces and factors more powerful than a university.

Still, a university is not without power. It has special kinds of resources—its faculty and its students. Their energies, if concentrated on the right issues, and consistently supported by university administration, can make a difference in the life of cities, of metropolitan areas and of our country. So it is that a university calling itself "metropolitan" may be thought of as having an obligation and a special opportunity to interact with the diverse communities of its area, and to structure itself so that its resources will be employed in new ways. The metropolitan university, because it is a new institution, may be able to imagine new relationships with other institutions and bodies in its region; it may be able to bring new experience and ideas from outside the university onto its campus with immense benefit to its programs of study. William Blake once said: "What is now proved was once imagined." Let the metropolitan university greatly exercise its imagination and it may become the university of the next century.