FROM THE EDITOR

BY BARBARA HOLLAND

Growth patterns across the U.S. are shifting dramatically with rapid population expansions across portions of the south and west , especially. Not only are some of these regions exploding with new residents, they are also increasingly diverse and multicultural. Schools, colleges and universities struggle alike to handle the expanding and complex demands of new urban, suburban and exurban communities and their occupants. Urban sprawl abounds, as metropolitan regions like Atlanta, Dallas-Fort Worth, Denver, and Phoenix, among many others, just keep getting bigger and bigger. And each urban megalopolis expects and demands that public higher education adapt to serve its residents and sustain its economy. The expectations are enormous. At a recent higher education conference, a large public university in the west said that by 2010 it would be serving more than 90,000 students.

Most of us at urban and metropolitan universities eagerly support increased access to higher education; America is still largely a proponent of universal access to education (though there is considerable disagreement on how to pay for that access). However, the current rates of growth in some states and regions are daunting, especially when we consider the expense of building the physical capacity to serve so many students. In other regions that are not growing, pressure for access may also be intense when there are, for example, new opportunities for economic renewal in particular communities that are distant from existing institutions.

Some of these new demands for access to education can be met by alternative delivery modes and technology, but the continuing expectation of most students is that at least some of their education will involve classroom time with good faculty and other students, and with access to many of the aspects of campus life and learning resources available at traditional institutions. More than anything, students living and working in these large urban areas want quality, value, and convenience. They want access to education on their terms— at a time and place that matches their needs and the competing demands of family and work.

The response of many states, multi-campus systems and individual campuses has been to create new branch campuses in locations that align with population trends and economic expansion. There are so many of these new campuses in the western states that they have formed the Western Association of Branch Campus Administrators. The idea for this issue of *Metropolitan Universities* arose from conversations I had at the last two annual conferences of WABCA, where leaders of these branch operations gather to exchange experiences and seek to understand the challenges they encounter in common. The articles they have prepared for the journal explore the experiences of their organizations, and collectively suggest that we might think of these branch campuses as the "new generation" of metropolitan universities. They may also, through their innovative relationships with their communities, teach some older urban and metropolitan institutions a few new things about serving an urbanized region.

Interestingly, while some branch campuses are created by large urban and metropolitan universities, most are the offspring of multi-campus systems or of single, traditional "flagship" institutions located in areas remote from the new centers of economic action

and expansion. But, whatever the mission of the main campus behind the branch, a message of the articles in this issue is that each of these new campuses tends to exhibit key characteristics of the metropolitan mission as articulated by the Declaration of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (printed in each issue of this journal). Why is this the case?

Branch campuses are created to respond to changing public demand and expectations. They may begin as a response to strong legislative pressure to provide educational services for a particular workforce or economic development strategy, or branches can be a competitive action by an older institution seeking to capture a new competitive market niche to expand revenues and enrollments. Whatever their founding purpose, the main reason branch campuses so strongly and easily take on the traits of the metropolitan mission is because they are designed to be responsive to urgent community demands for access to convenient and relevant educational programs of good quality. Most older urban and metropolitan universities, when they reflect on their 30, 40, or 50+ year-old history will see those same purposes of quality and convenience in their own roots, and most still strive to retain that responsiveness, even as the years seem to inevitably build in the increasing rigidity of organizational traditions. Perhaps these new branch campuses can remind us of our roots and refresh our commitment to adaptiveness and creativity.

There is a reason it is hard to keep that flexibility intact, even in young organizations. The public expectation that branches be responsive and adaptive creates some unique stresses on those who lead and those who teach at branch campuses. In many ways, branch campuses are the most conspicuous example of the dilemma faced by all of higher education today, that being the public expectation that our campuses be ready to explore and implement innovative responses to rapidly changing conditions in the economic and social environment. Especially in regard to the issues of workforce development and economic expansion, the business and government sectors often place extraordinary pressure on the nearest higher education institution to be instantly responsive and adaptive to training needs. Branch campuses are often the invention of a mature, less flexible institution seeking to be responsive without actually having to alter the core culture and programs of the main campus.

On the surface, this seems like a good and simple strategy: the main campus continues life as usual without much change or disruption, but it gets good public credit and support for creating a new campus location. The new campus is often promoted as the intellectual extension of the creating university into a new community with unmet educational needs. Sometimes the new campus is created with some distinctive program elements that make the learning environment different from that of the main campus, but in most cases, the founding institution expects the branch to be an acorn that doesn't fall too far from the tree. However, no matter how hard the mature campus tries to ensure replication, the new campus is not really ever a faithful reproduction of the creating institution; it cannot meet its purpose for being without adapting to the new setting.

To be truly responsive the new campus must be organized and operated differently to at least some degree. Externally this can be confusing to the public who may wonder if the new campus offers the quality of the "real" university. Internally, the faculty of the creating institution may raise their eyebrows at the branch campus' willingness to hire

faculty with business credentials or to engage in scholarship that combines theory and practice in community settings. Tensions can arise between the norms and expectations of the "main" campus safely situated in more settled conditions, and the needs of newer branch campuses to experiment and develop new programs in response to local pressures and expectations. The new campus often develops deep relationships with business, civic and political leaders in their community, which may also create tensions with the main campus.

The ways that branch campuses work to resolve these tensions can offer lessons that have relevance for more established institutions. These campuses must meet two standards of excellence; two forms of legitimacy and excellence: the traditional norms of the academy and relevance and responsiveness to regional needs. As is the case with more mature urban and metropolitan universities, these new campuses are exploring new ways of building, interpreting, applying and sharing knowledge through interactive relationships with many other kinds of organizations, while also working to achieve recognition and validation through the more traditional standards and values held by higher education.

Many of my branch campus colleagues would rush to add that while the duality of their working environment is challenging, they see great value in their bonds to the main campus. As the guest editor of this issue, Hal Dengerink of Washington State University Vancouver points out in his own article, the critical ingredient in the inter-campus relationship is mission understanding. In other words, both the main campus and the branch must agree on their points of mission distinctiveness and mission commonality that, in combination, are necessary to meet the purposes for the new campus while maintaining a strong connection to its founding campus. History teaches us that most branch campuses in the past eventually evolved to become separate institutions. Several authors in this issue would say that independence may not necessarily be desirable or inevitable in this new, more dynamic environment. It is too soon to tell whether these young campuses will continue to differentiate themselves to the point that they seek autonomy from the campuses that created them, or whether a constructive, sustainable balance will be achieved between the strengths of the traditional academy and the innovative talents of the branch campuses that will allow each to operate as successful members of a complex institutional constellation.

The authors also remind us that new campuses have the freedom from history and the motivation of urgency that gives them the opportunity to be imaginative, take a chance on a new strategy, and find a way to make a lot happen with few resources. The stories in this issue describe many of these innovative experiences. I enjoyed reading these articles about community relationships, the challenges of collaboration, faculty cultures, and mission articulation and hope you draw some new ideas and inspiration from them as well.

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