California Higher Education: The Master Plan Faulted

Berkeley. The University of California regents held their 2-day April meeting in Berkeley at the university system's office-building headquarters just off the Cal campus. Toward the end of the second afternoon a line of police formed to guard the courtyard at the back of the building where Governor Ronald Reagan's limousine would pick him up when the meeting ended. On the roof of a parking garage across the street a reserve of state and county police was visible, obviously waiting for the demonstrators, who this time didn't turn up.

Earlier that afternoon the regents had voted to reassert their authority to veto faculty appointments, a power which a few years back they had delegated to the chancellors at the nine university campuses. The vote and the police presence were sobering signs of the times. The attention given student unrest and the threat of political intervention from Sacramento, however, has diverted attention from strains developing within the million-student higher-education system in California, strains which are creating increasing pressure for changes in finance, control, and allocation of resources.

A Rude Shock

Under attack these days is the Master Plan which provides the charter for California's three-tier public system of junior colleges, state colleges, and university campuses, all intended to play clearly defined, complementary roles. The California system has been much admired for its amplitude and almost Newtonian symmetry and has been widely emulated elsewhere, so it is something of a shock to an outsider to find that its detractors have declared open season on the Master Plan.

The Master Plan was established by the Donahoe Act in 1960, and the decade during which it was to serve as a detailed guide for the rapid growth of the system is nearing an end. The critics charge that the Master Plan has fallen short as a blueprint for balanced expansion and optimum use of resources, that it has permitted development of a rigidly stratified system and provided a weak mechanism for the coordination of programs. Lately there have been complaints about a failure to open higher education to racial and ethnic minorities and low-income groups generally.

The Master Plan has been criticized before, but specific proposals for change have been gathering more momentum than in the past. Perhaps the most widely discussed proposals are those contained in a report on higher education prepared for the Joint Committee on Higher Education of the California Legislature. The chief recommendation of the report is that the three sectors of higher education be overseen by a single, unified governing board and that the statewide pattern be replaced by regional groupings of institutions.

It must be emphasized that the report was prepared for the committee by a Berkeley planning and management consulting firm, and is expected to provide a basis for hearings.

The joint committee is an ad hoc group actually formed to look into the disruptions at Berkeley at the time of the free-speech movement. Chairman of the committee is Jesse Unruh, who was assembly speaker when the Democrats were in control, and is a prominent figure in California politics. A prevalent view is that the committee was formed to deflect hasty, punitive action by the legislature, and that it accomplished this purpose by turning to a general review of higher education. Unruh, under a California tradition of bipartisan chairmanships, has continued to head the committee in a Republican-controlled statehouse, but a change is expected, and it is not known what course the committee would take on questions of basic education policy.

One comment Unruh has made about the report, which includes a thorough review of statistics and trends, is that it is a reminder of how little people know about the system, the real pattern of education in the state.

In the 10 years since 1959–60, total enrollment in higher education has risen from 450,000 to more than a million. In these years the percentage of students enrolled in private colleges and universities has decreased from about 13 to 10 percent. In the public sector, enrollment in junior colleges has gone from 259,000 a decade ago to 568,000. State-college enrollment rose from 88,082 to 211,600, and university enrollment climbed from 44,900 to 98,800.

Since 58 percent of enrollment is in junior colleges and nearly half of the students enrolled are freshmen, the higher-education system, as the report observes, resembles "a building with a very large lobby."

Attrition Rate Increases

Put another way, higher education's "open door" in California seems to be a revolving door for many students. In public institutions it takes 550 entrants to produce 150 graduates. And, as enrollment has mounted, so has the attrition rate. Ten years ago it took two freshmen to produce one sophomore; now the ratio is three to one.

Many entering freshmen, of course, aren't aiming at a bachelor's degree, but the staggering casualty rate is a cause of real concern to planners. And since very little is known about the reasons behind this heavy attrition, the report to the joint committee urges the creation of a "statewide student flow information system," on student "entry and persistence."

Underrepresentation of some racial and ethnic groups in public higher education is well charted. In elementary schools in California the percentage of students having Spanish surnames is 14.4 percent, as compared to 7.5 percent in junior colleges, 2.9 percent in state colleges, and 0.7 percent in the university. Negro enrollment in elementary grades is 8.6 percent, while in junior colleges it is 6.1 percent, in state colleges, 2.9 percent, and in the university, 0.8 percent. Orientals, on the other hand, make up 2.1 percent of elementary school enrollment and 2.9 percent of the enrollment in junior colleges, 1.9 percent in state colleges, and 4.9 percent in the university.

In the report* to the joint committee

* *The Challenge of Achievement*: A Report on Public and Private Higher Education in California to the Joint Committee on Higher Education of the California Legislature.

NEWS IN BRIEF

• **SALE OF ATOMIC FUEL PLANTS CONSIDERED**: The Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) may move to transfer the nation's atomic fuel processing plants to private industry. On AEC initiative, a small White House study group, which includes the President's Science Advisor Lee A. DuBridge, plans to look into the matter. The three gaseous diffusion plants, which are located in Oak Ridge, Tenn.; Paducah, Ky.; and Portsmouth, Ohio, are used to separate uranium isotopes 235 and 238 from raw uranium ore. Thus far the government has supplied all atomic fission material for commercial use; it has never allowed private operators to process their own nuclear fuel. AEC officials say that the AEC wants to sell the plants as part of its overall plan to eventually transfer atomic energy activities for peaceful purposes to private industry. The move to sell the plants, which are estimated to cost the government about $2.4 billion, is certain to meet with opposition in Congress, particularly from the Democrats. Representative Chet Holifield (D–Calif.) the influential chairman of the joint committee, and Senator Clinton P. Anderson (D–N.M.) have indicated that they may oppose the sale on the grounds that such a transfer would result in sharp increases for electrical energy users and a boost in government costs of developing atomic weapons.

• **YOUNGER TRUSTEES AT PRINCETON**: Princeton University's Board of Trustees, whose median age is more than 60, moved on 19 April to provide for representation of college students and recent graduates on Princeton's ruling board. The Trustees also moved to eliminate a stipulation that no graduate could be elected to the Board until he had been an alumnus for 10 years. The Board will be enlarged to a total of 40 trustees by adding four additional members to be elected by college upperclassmen and first- and second-year alumni. Princeton is the first major Ivy League institution to give students and recent alumni special voting representation. Now, 25 members of the Board of Trustees will be chosen by the board itself; nine by the alumni-at-large; and four for 4-year terms by the college upperclassmen and recent graduates. There are two ex-officio members.

the demand for change seems to be strongly linked to the cause of achieving greater equality of opportunity in higher education. But the focus of the report's criticism is the weakness of the mechanism for coordination, as the following excerpt indicates.

> . . . California's higher education structure is at once highly stratified and highly fragmented. No single agency has authority and responsibility for statewide policy development, the establishment of new institutions, the approval of new programs, or comprehensive financial planning. In past years each of the three public segments has been able to add enrollment, develop new programs and activities, build new facilities and budget available funds with little attention to similar activity and expansion in the other two segments.
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> New programs such as equal opportunity programs, computer assisted instruction, educational research and data processing centers are or will be established within each segment with little regard for what is being done within the other segments. Except for isolated informal arrangements between individual institutions with a strong common interest, the three segments are operated as if they were in three different states. The consequence is duplication of effort, needless competition and, most seriously, lost opportunities for productive cooperation in teaching, research and community service.

The ultimate power to allocate resources for higher education lies with the Governor and the legislature, but the framers of the Master Plan hopefully created a Coordinating Council for Higher Education to do just what its name implies. The council was established in 1961; it has done useful work in such areas as the allocation of federal funds and has served as a forum for discussion of high-level policy matters. But the council is essentially a voluntary body and, significantly, plays a small role in budget affairs. It is dominated by representatives of the three levels of higher education. The result is that it seldom takes a really ecumenical view.

The steam behind current criticism of the Master Plan is in part generated by differences suppressed in the compromise that made the Master Plan possible. The state colleges, in particular, have been restive in the role of "teaching" institutions in which they were cast. At the time of the agreement on the Master Plan the state colleges were rewarded by being freed from the control of the state board of education and given their own board of trustees. They were also given financial support and allowed greater initiative to help them make the transition from teacher-training colleges to institutions which could provide sound education in the liberal and applied arts, technology, and even engineering. College faculties were authorized to operate master's programs and perform research where it directly served the teaching function, but doctoral programs were proscribed, save where a state-college faculty could fashion an agreement for a "joint" doctoral program with a university department.

Limited graduate education has become the symbol of the "second class" status which is the state-college grievance. The argument is that heavier teaching loads, lower salaries, restrictions on research, and the generally lower academic horizons make it hard to attract and keep top faculty.

The university, with its higher per-student costs, in part at least attributable to the higher costs of graduate education, is made, in this view, to seem a haven of self-indulgent academic Bourbons.

This analysis is a biased one, but there is no question that the university is on the defensive. University president Charles J. Hitch gives the impression of a man forced to fight on several fronts. Hitch and the chancellors at the individual campuses preside over a community in which the need for changes in the university is widely acknowledged and where a fair amount of progress has been made. Some of the problems, however, involve the workings of the whole higher education system.

Although neither Hitch nor other ranking university officials proclaim it, the principle of mobility—particularly upward mobility—between the tiers of the higher education system decreed in the Master Plan doesn't really work very well. Hitch has been putting stress on giving ethnic and racial minorities greater access to the university—on winning approval, for example, of specific steps like raising the percentage of specially admitted students from 2 to 4 percent. He is also espousing programs to build "bridges" to community colleges and encouraging proposals for various sorts of "outreach centers" in the community.

A central difficulty in achieving his aims here and in other areas is money. Cutbacks in federal support because of the Vietnam war have coincided with a period of retrenchment in state financing. The university and the other segments of the higher education system are facing a third year of austerity budgets, which have drastically limited

construction of new facilities. Virtually no new programs have been launched by the university, and it is thought very possible that by next September the university may not be able to maintain its vaunted tradition of never rejecting qualified candidates.

Criticism of waste and duplication attributed to the Master Plan is found increasingly in the press. Last year, for example, half the junior college districts are said to have had a quarter or more of their enrollment capacity unused. In the latest year for which figures are available, 1965–66, state colleges reportedly operated 13 master's degree programs in foreign languages. Although these programs averaged only 8.28 students per class, the colleges were seeking to create 18 more such programs.

More fundamental is the criticism that the Master Plan perpetuates institutional forms which may have been obsolescent when the plan was accepted. Critics ask whether it makes sense to try to multiply universities modeled on Berkeley and UCLA and to build an indefinite number of carbon-copy state colleges when the models may fail to meet the demands of today, not to speak of tomorrow. A greater variety of forms and a fairer and more imaginative use of resources is necessary, say the critics. And quite often in the university, where "decentralization" is much discussed these days, one hears the prophecy that the university will spawn no more conventional campuses.

Higher education in California seems to be suffering a kind of stasis caused by the cumulative effects of rapid expansion and steeply rising costs, campus disruptions, and differences over the social role of the university. And the effects are apparent inside and outside the university.

Californians, who, more than other Americans, have viewed education as an individual right and a public good, appear to be wavering a bit. With the vote on faculty appointments, a majority on the board of regents seemed to have formed behind Governor Reagan. The vote was widely attributed to the retention on the San Diego campus of Herbert Marcuse, whose works are a fount of radical campus theory. The regents are considering the question of tuition for resident students, a matter of heavy symbolic significance in California, and the decision could well point the direction for high policy for higher education.

In fact the trouble seems to run fairly deep. Last year the voters turned down a $125-million university bond issue considered very important to orderly expansion. Last month, in local elections, proposals for school tax increases and educational bond issues were almost uniformly rejected. Taxes are high and tax revolt is in the air, but what was different this time was not that education was being attacked, but that few seemed to be wholeheartedly pleading its case.

To put too much stress on the pathology of the present situation would be to slight the wealth, vitality, and confidence which produced the California system. But California has been a national bellwether in higher education, and other states may do well to look for symptoms of a similar malaise.—JOHN WALSH

HEW: Finch Tries To Gain Control over Department's Advisory Groups

In viewing this Administration, scientists have become a little edgy about the prominence which the White House has given to political considerations in filling major scientific posts. Some scientists have recently been given a similar, though much less dramatic, worry by learning that HEW Secretary Robert H. Finch has ordered a complete review of all his department's public advisory committees, has ordered a moratorium on the appointment of all new committee members through 31 August, and has affirmed his intention to keep the appointment power to HEW committees in the office of the Secretary.

No one disputes Finch's right to try to impose more order in HEW's sprawling advisory system which consists of some 430 committees. What scientists are worried about is that there will be more attempts to install political appointees, not only on the advisory councils which advise on policy in the medical area, but also on the study sections which, in large part, determine how the research money will be allocated and what projects will be chosen for funding.

In the past, appointment to committees in such HEW agencies as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), especially to the scientific study sections, has been controlled largely by administrators in these agencies and by university scientists. Appointment to these groups has been nominally in the hands of the HEW Secretary, but the Secretary's office has done much more ratifying of agency suggestions than it has engaged in actually choosing committee members.

What HEW now wants to do is to better insure that "all committee selections will be made by the Secretary" in the words of HEW's 15 April policy guidelines for public advisory committees. On a draft memorandum outlining procedure for appointments to advisory committees, the appointment process begins by having an assistant to the HEW Secretary obtain relevant names from the White House Talent Bank. The next step involves sending a list of "must" and "recommended" names to the agency head who then compiles a list of recommended appointments. If the names are not satisfactory, they can be returned to the agency head for further action.

The final decision on procedures for appointing HEW advisory committees has not yet been completed, says David D. Kinley, the assistant to Finch who is working full time on the problem of HEW's committees. Kinley did make clear that the HEW Secretary wants the ultimate power to appoint committees and that he "wants to get into the selection process before the paper work is all done." Kinley said that names both from the White House Talent Bank and names recommended by congressmen would be included in the names sent to the agencies for appoint-