No Dean Left Behind

I want to thank you all for being here this afternoon. Thank you for choosing to be here with CCAS. The conference is going well, and I again extend my great thanks to our CCAS Board, and Joe Gow in particular, for planning this meeting, to Anne-Marie McCarten, our executive director, and to Kristen Novel for doing such a fine job behind the scenes.

Many thanks go out to ICFAD board members and staff as well – Richard Durst, the new executive director Liz Cole, Ron Jones, and Maurice Sevigny – for making this coordination happen. As you know in many large organizations collaboration is extremely difficult, and to do so says a great deal for the collaborative spirit of both our organizations.

The point of collaboration brings me to the musings I will share with you today, and while the concept of collaboration and the title of the talk, 'No Dean Left Behind," do not seem connected, hopefully they will become so in another 30 minutes or so.

I came up with the title of the talk last March – I think I was in one of those flippant, cynical moods common to deans in the early spring. And having publicly announced the title at our April board meeting my destiny was set. Thus for the last six months or so I have been contemplating the many ways deans of Arts and Science **have** been left behind in the past few decades, and how, perhaps, this organization, beginning its 41st year, can help to get us back onto the playing field.

Of course the title in itself is catchy and an attention-getter, since none in this room have been unaffected by NCLB. As you probably know, the term 'No child left behind' originated in 1983 when President Reagan told the National Council of Negro Women that he had 'begun to outline an agenda for excellence in education that will leave no child behind." The program's efforts were strongly supported by a coalition of Southern Democratic governors interested in bringing business opportunities to their states. And business leaders were (and still are) very interested in the caliber of the educational

system in the states where their corporations operate. The legislation, passed in 2001, culminated four decades of increasing Federal expansion in education.

The phrase itself has been immortalized. Since 2002 the phrase has been used widely. From not leaving a democrat behind, to an environmentalist, to a planet, and to one that depicts three young men dressed in bow ties and tuxedos protesting President Bush's tax cuts with signs reading "no millionaire left behind."

But the title aside, the real reason for using this theme stems from my frustration in the past couple of years as an Arts & Science dean. I have felt increasingly powerless to control many of the variables that affect my ability to do my job well. Variables, I thought, deans should have some control over.

In my first couple years as dean, I was mired in developing my own vision for the college and the minutiae of the job. Learning protocol, memorizing the faculty contract, determining how to negotiate with my provost all consumed me. Furthermore, I was in a bit of awe of my position—I had received a generous compensation package upon entering this new job—but they insisted on feeding me. I had never been invited to so many lunches, receptions, and dinners as either a faculty member or a department head. In addition, people actually listened to me when I talked. How cool. Of course this meant I had to be more careful of just what I said—a lesson learned quickly.

After a couple of years I think I got the 'hang of it.' The appropriate dates were on the calendar, I was familiar with the rumbling of the faculty, and I accepted the fact that the job was similar to playing "Whack-a-Mole," in which as soon as one mole goes down, another pops up. That's just the way it is— I learned to deal with it.

A former business dean once reflected on what he termed the career life cycle of a dean.[1] He described five cycles, beginning with the visionary stage, progressing into the implementation and maintenance phases, and ending with the neurotic and suicidal stages. Perhaps I had reached the neurotic stage because now that I had some breathing

time I looked up to realize there were a number of issues in which I felt totally underappreciated and underutilized. Yet these areas affected my day-to-day life as well as those of the faculty, staff, and most importantly the students in my college.

In the center of all our work as academic deans is the genuine interest in maximizing the quality of the education we provide our students. We aim to hire the best faculty; we evaluate them to pieces; we beg for additional funds to add sections in order to keep our class sizes to an academically sensible number; and we strategically plan our unpredictable future. We work with donors to supplement the inadequate dollars provided by our states and/or tuition revenues so we can provide our faculty and students state-of-the-art laboratory equipment, finance experiential learning activities, fund faculty development initiatives, and attract intellectually stimulating speakers.

But we are like hamsters in a running wheel. We keep the motion going but we are not moving forward. And in fact, many would argue the quality of the education in our institutions is declining. Books published just this past academic year entitled *Declining by Degrees, Our Underachieving Colleges,* and *Excellence without a Soul,* join others in this century such as *The Great Rip Off in Higher Education, As the Walls of Academia are Tumbling Down,* and *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line* to tell a sad story.

The evidence is incontrovertible. The September 2006 report from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education[2] showed that 39 percent of adults who are now between the ages of 35 and 64 and who would have gone to college in roughly the years 1962-1981 have a college degree. Of students who went to college in the years 1992 – 2001, 39% also obtained a college degree. In that 20-year span of time there has NOT been a single percentage point increase in the number of individuals who were granted a college degree. This stagnation has significantly impacted our international standing in higher education.

Students are flocking into our colleges and universities, but they are not coming out with degrees. Graduation rates of our entering students have also not changed over the past 20

years. Even though the number of high school seniors entering four-year institutions has increased from 49 percent to 63 percent since 1975, only six out of every ten of them, on average, graduate with a B.A. within six years.[3]

Now is there a disconnect between these numbers and the quality we oversee as deans? I can hear some of my elitist faculty smugly say that college isn't for everyone and the fact we can graduate close to 2/3 of incoming students in six years isn't so bad. In addition, many retort that quality hasn't changed in the past 20 years - the student has. Yes, it's true. The type of student we are educating has changed over the last twenty years. But shouldn't our quality change as well? Why should we be satisfied with 1980s quality in 2006? Furthermore, there is not a good enough correlation between the academic talent of the individual student and their ability to graduate for us to dismiss this data as not our problem.

More politically pertinent is the fact that the burden of proof of the quality of our institutions has shifted away from the responsibilities of individual students toward the responsibilities of faculty and institutions to ensure that students succeed. If I had a cynical bone in my body I might call this the helicopter model of higher education policy in recognition of those helicopter parents with whom we have periodic contact. But of course, I don't. By golly, NCAA division I athletes have graduation rates of 77 percent. That's clear evidence it can be done.

So what is affecting the quality of the education, however it is defined, we provide our students, and how have deans been left behind?

A first area in which deans have been left behind is not being involved in the setting of university admission standards.

Admission standards or lack thereof….

A recent ACT report in my home state reported that fewer than 25 percent of students graduating from Iowa High schools were prepared for college. This is Iowa, folks, where

90% of our youth graduate from high school and we supposedly have a rock-solid educational system.

So what is going on in the high schools? Let me count the ways. But since deans cannot really affect high schools' over-emphasis on sports and grade inflation, let's focus on an area where deans could be influential.

College preparatory curriculum is fairly standard across the states. Four years of English, three years of math and science, and three to four yeas of social science including government and history. In addition some four-year institutions require two years of foreign language. Available research pretty clearly shows that success in college is greatly improved by an additional year of science, math, language, and/or communication skills. However, as the high school student approaches his or her senior year she is offered a variety of elective options, one of which is to take college courses typically provided by community colleges and to receive dual credit for both high school and college.

Students are entering their freshman year with an average of 9-12 credits. This appears to make economic sense to their families because it generally means a tuition-free semester. But most of us know that the courses these students are taking in high school, often taught by high school teachers, are not equivalent to the quality of the courses we would ordinarily provide on our own campuses. Three facts follow from this practice. The first is that high school students are not taking the additional courses in math and science and language that we know promote success in the university. Second, the college courses taken in high school most often under-prepare the student for the higher level course taken at university. And finally, as many times in life, we evaluate things on the basis of how they match our expectations. Providing students with an expectation they will succeed in college by providing them with relatively low-level dual-enrollment courses puts them in a deceptively unstable situation when they arrive on campus and find campus courses are not what they expected.

A gubernatorial candidate in Iowa proposed as his education slate that he would allow up to 30 hours of credit taken in high school to be used for college credit. How did admission requirements become more the jurisdiction of a governor than a dean?

A & S deans should partner with both education and business deans to look into college admission standards. I speak of business deans because organizations such as The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Business Roundtable—two prominent, Washington-based groups representing business owners and chief executives of large corporations, respectively—announced last month that they have formed a coalition with other business groups to protect the NCLB legislation from major changes. Just as they were prominent in enacting this legislation, business leaders are seriously interested in improving the quality of both high school and college education, and A & S deans could use some powerful partners.

An additional reason we should watch high school standards stems from a recent statement made by Education Commissioner Margaret Spellings in her address to the National Press Club in late September. She said, "A high school diploma should be a ticket to success – including success in college" Now if you couple this with the statement "I believe God wants us to send our kids to college" made recently in a *Time* magazine article by Joel Osteen, a Houston pastor of prosperity theology you have an idea of an emerging higher education policy that we will face us in the not-too-distant future.

Academic control over curriculum

In addition to the fact that so many of our first-year college students are enrolling with community college credit, students continue to take credits from elsewhere while they are pursuing a degree from our own institutions. Sixty percent of students who receive a bachelor's degree earn credits from more than one higher education institution.[4] This not only includes credits received in high school, but also during the summer, in the evenings, and by distance.

A significant proportion of these courses are taken to fulfill our colleges' or universities' general education, or liberal arts core or distribution requirements – whatever they are called at your institution. Estimates suggest that close to half of the credits earned toward the completion of these programs are taken elsewhere.

Where once the liberal arts core was the heart of our institutions, it has now been down-sized and out-sourced. Faculty are not interested in teaching the core, students consider it an obstacle to their graduation, and our own admissions counselors refrain from discussing its value for fear of losing recruits.

Yet it is what differentiates our institutions from the many for-profit entities with which we compete for students, and it warrants more nourishing than it is currently receiving. Our neglect has left us open to assault from various arenas. In Carol Schneider's words, "American society today exhibits a striking ambivalence towards the traditions of 'liberal' or 'liberal arts' education. Liberal education is at one and the same time prized, despised, revised and disguised."[5] Please take the opportunity to read her chapter in the book *Declining by Degrees* titled, "Liberal Education: Slip-Sliding away?" And as deans we need to be part of the national alliance for liberal education that Schneider and AAC & U are championing.

Of course a dean's responsibility for academic control of the curriculum extends beyond the general education core. While faculty and programs believe they have the unique responsibility to fashion their own curriculum, there needs to be greater oversight. Over the years as faculty and discipline interests diversify, curricula can easily begin to look like a hodgepodge of courses. Students fulfill their major requirements by sampling from an array of ala carte offerings – three courses here, two there, perhaps, or not, a senior seminar. Often there is little, if any, link of courses to each other – either vertically or horizontally. Consequently we have made it extremely easy for students to substitute a course taken elsewhere as a replacement for a course taken at their own institution.

We need to provide greater intellectual continuity within our own curriculum. Faculty need to develop their curricula using the same expertise with which they approach their own research and artistic endeavors. We need to be creative in linking our major courses with introductory general education courses, with each other, and even with other non-major courses, so that our students are better prepared for the multidisciplinary world they are about to enter. A few years back I had the opportunity to work with a group of CCAS deans, led by Dr. Lee Edwards, to develop a curriculum for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at the United Arab Emirates University. With no restrictions in front of us, we devised an hour-glass curriculum in which students start broad, become discipline-specific, and then broaden again applying their discipline-specific knowledge to other areas. What fun! Even if such a radical transformation is impractical on our campuses we should at least be willing to entertain discussions of what we envision to be the best curricular progression.

Academic control over research funding

The good, the bad, and the earmarks.

Over forty years ago, Clark Kerr wrote that the onslaught of federal dollars had radically reshaped many of the nation's leading universities.[6] Faculty migrated from the classroom to the research lab. Graduate programs arose because of the need for apprentice lab workers and-semi skilled instructors who were willing to work for low wages.

Yet despite the loss of instructional faculty, faculty felt they were building on a knowledge base necessary to maintain the economic and social standing of the country. Abound in knowledge we did! Most of us have degrees from research intensive and or extensive institutions. We have worked on soft money, we have researched, created art, and published, and we have submitted competitive grant applications and received our priority scores with joy or lamentation.

Federal dollars are again in a position to radically reshape our universities – all universities, not just the most prominent. Earmark dollars have now regrettably "become

part of the fabric of higher education" as expressed in a recent *Science* article.[7] This year generally appropriated grants are expected to total $2.4 billion, a 63% increase since 2003. In addition, the distinction between competitive and non-competitive research funding is blurring.

Procuring earmarks is costly to an institution but good for politicians and lobbyists. A recent report by the National Bureau of Economic Research states that the returns to lobbying are between zero and one dollar for universities not represented by a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee (SAC) or House Appropriations Committee (HAC).[8]

In addition, recent data also suggests that the research stemming from earmarks is not of the quality of that stemming from non-earmark projects – if there are any publications that result.[9] And of course earmarks can bankrupt federal agencies – like FIPSE, whose aim is to support innovative projects that promise to be models for improving the quality of postsecondary education and increasing student access but who were unable to provide a competitive grant program in 2005.

For me this largess seriously confuses the mission of my university and causes me angst as a dean. The random and unpredictable nature of these large pockets of dollars generally rewards fashionable projects at the expense of other, conceivably worthier projects. Earmark dollars are here one year and gone the next, creating havoc in course scheduling and creating impossible demands for temporary space assignments. In addition, counting earmarks as equal to competitive funding in promotion and tenure decisions makes me woefully uneasy, but I need more voices to stand behind me. All in all, earmarks are compromising the quality in higher education.

It is my understanding that at the beginning of this influx, CCAS took a stand against earmarks. And for simply practical and politic reasons it may not be possible now. However, we should be able to sound our resentment as deans and make a general

statement in support of institutions that have refused to accept earmarks (of course there are exceptions even at these institutions).

How did we get here?

Now I am not sure how deans got away from the table in these matters, but I know it has occurred over a long period of time and is complicated by a myriad of variables.

What we know for certain is that deans' roles have changed since CCAS had its first annual meeting in 1965. Our responsibilities have been defined by the times and have included dealing with student protests in the late '60s and '70s, declining budgets in the '80s, and the increasing importance diversity, assessment, capital campaigns, and development in the '90s. We are engaged in faculty recruitment, strategic planning, curriculum development, internal and external accountability, presidential imperatives, technological mandates, national survey data, etc., etc. Just look at the schedule for this meeting. So many items require our attention that some get placed on a back burner. How can we be accountable for maintaining quality in all of our daily duties?
So what can we do??

In the tradition of No Dean Left Behind, we could develop a standardized test. Please take out a paper and pencil. Calculators can be used – but none that are attached to cell phones.

In an effort to ensure you remember the information I have presented this afternoon, some of the sample items will include content from this material. Other items should be things you already know –if not, however, Kaplan might have a night course available.

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No Dean Left Behind Standardized Test Items [not included here]

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Now regardless of your score, deans need help on these issues, and it is our hope that this organization as it begins its new chapter at William & Mary does not leave you behind. This year CCAS will embark on a new era to re-invent itself. We will be conducting surveys with our membership to determine what your needs are and how we can help you fulfill those needs. We plan to construct a new web site and hopefully entertain white papers on important topics of decanal concern. And we plan to connect and collaborate. Over this past year I have had the opportunity to attend a National Conference of Academic Deans (NCAD) in Arkansas and was on a panel at TECSCU that consisted of individuals from the Council of Academic Deans from Research Education Institutions (CADREI), the Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges of Teacher Education (AILACTE), and a representative dean from a HBCU university. We need to continue accepting invitations to work with other organizations to ensure that CCAS deans have a voice in higher education policy issues.

In its early history CCAS was more seriously involved with Washington efforts. We had conversations with the Commissioner of Education, and we made a statement opposing earmarks, supporting affirmative action programs, and advocating academic standards in NCAA. We need to get back our voice.

Most educational policy is created by a number of organizations being led by presidents, and as luck will have it, Joe Gow, who just took over the presidency of CCAS this morning, is an interim president. Perhaps with his leadership and our new executive administrative team, which also consists of a former college president, we can move CCAS to being more in the center of the conversation. Please make efforts this year to tell us what connections you would like us to make.

Thank you so much for listening to me this afternoon. It is my luck that this organization allows its presidents to give their talk at the end of their term of service rather than at the beginning. It has been one of my greatest academic pleasures to serve in this organization, and an honor and a privilege to lead this organization during the major

changes we have gone through these past two years. I know I leave CCAS in great hands. Go in peace.

Notes

[1]Allan D. Spritzer, "It's Not Easy Being Dean," *BizEd* 4 (November/December 2004): 36-40.

[2] *Measuring Up 2006: The National Report Card on Higher Education*, The National Center for Policy and Higher Education, 2006.

[3]Kevin Carey, *A Matter of Degrees: Improving Graduation Rates in Four-Year Colleges and Universities*, The Education Trust, May 2004.

[4]Carol G. Schneider, "Practicing Liberal Education: Formative Themes in the Re-invention of Liberal Learning," Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2003.

[5]Carol G. Schneider, "Liberal Education: Slip-Sliding Away?" in *Declining by Degrees*, ed. Richard H. Hersh and John Merrow (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2005).

[6]Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1963).

[7] Jeffrey Mervis, "Academic Earmarks: The Money Schools Love to Hate," *Science* 313 (8 September 2006): 1374.

[8] R. Pielke Jr., "University Responsibilities and Academic Earmarks," Center for Science and Technology Policy Research [Internet], 10 April 2006; available from http://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/prometheus/archives/education/000773university_responsib.html (29 October 2006)

[9]A. Abigail Payne, "The Role of Politically Motivated Subsidies on University Research Activities," *Educational Policy* 17 (1 January 2003): 12-37.