

CHARGE TO THE COORDINATING BOARD TEXAS COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

By
GOVERNOR JOHN CONNALLY

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Chairman Gray, Governor Smith, Speaker Barnes, Vice Chairman Gresham, members of the Coordinating Board, ladies and gentlemen, I am very grateful for Chairman Gray's invitation to be with you today for your opening meeting as you undertake a tremendous responsibility for the State of Texas.

First, I want to thank each of you for accepting the responsibility of membership of the Coordinating Board, Texas College and University System. I am sure you realized the magnitude of the task and the responsibility you were assuming when you agreed to serve, so I am all the more grateful for you to give of your time, your energy, of your wisdom -- to all of the people of this State.

You here today represent the embodiment of high hopes of a great many people.

That your opportunity for service in this capacity exists is a tribute to the farsighted vision of the leadership of Preston Smith, Speaker Barnes and all who served on the Committee on Education Beyond the High School who created the coordinating board of which some of you are now a member, and others devoted to quality higher education for our young people.

These high hopes envisioned are now passed to your hands. Whether the policies and procedures and plans contained in House Bill 1, become a living reality, or remain just an inanimate statement of hope, depends entirely on you.

Neither I nor the Legislature can guarantee the success of your efforts.

Only you can do that. Human beings, not laws, achieve progress. Thus the success or the failure of House Bill I will be your success or failure.

While the creation of this Board represents fulfillment of one of my greatest aspirations, I can only suggest to you how you may determine your course.

And I full well know you will receive advice from many sources. Some of it will be selfish advice, and most of it gratuitous.

But the policies you formulate--the course you set for higher education in Texas--are going to have to emanate from your own decisions.

Here, then, are some of the things I would like for you to consider as you begin your work.

First of all, I would remind you that neither monumental buildings, nor winning football teams, nor spacious dormitories, nor expansive campuses, nor anxious administrators, nor ambitious plans ever taught a college student, Faculties teach.

Books on the shelves and elaborate research projects, and I'm for those, concerned with esoteric subjects enrich the student mind only indirectly. Teachers teach.

The greatest risk you face is an institutionalized system, with each college or university grasping for its own ends without regard to the needs of the people of the whole state, and perhaps without being aware of those needs. I don't say this critically of any college president or any institution, but this is human nature. There is nothing wrong with being competitive.

But over the years in Texas we have come to regard each college or university as a separate institution, striving independently for success. In many cases regarded locally as a boon to the economy, it struggles to be all things to all people, willing to do almost anything that will assure its getting larger---larger in enrollment, larger in buildings, larger in number and level of degrees offered, larger in number of graduates, larger in number of alumni.

Always it strives to stand above its group in those visible evidences of growth. And it remains in constant danger of mediocrity as a result, I appointed you to this Board because of my confidence in your objectivity, your ability, your knowledge of education, your dedication to a better system of colleges and universities in this State.

Most of you attended college in Texas. Many of you have served on various governing boards of institutions of higher learning. You have certain institutional loyalties, just as each of us do.

But wherever you live in this state and from whatever institution you may have graduated, you can no longer represent or be a spokesman for any single college or university.

In fact, you must strive earnestly for even more objectivity in deciding questions affecting your Texas alma mater lest you be marked as its spokesman.

And I can well imagine that you will be cultivated, cajoled, coddled, even brainwashed by those who would wish you to take an institutional, regional or partisan view. Alumni and institutions will attempt to classify each of you as "my representative on the Coordinating Board."

This will be no easy burden, but you have my full confidence in your ability to bear it. If for any reason you find that you cannot, and that your loyalty to an institution or place or region puts you in too awkward a position to be objective, I trust that you will request relief from this responsibility rather than continue an uncomfortable situation.

I assure you that you were not appointed to represent any institution; you were named to represent the State of Texas in the coordination of all higher education under state authority.

Neither were you appointed to represent the geographical area where you were born, attended college, or where you now live. Texas, the entire state, the youth of this state, is your constituency, and to that constituency you owe your loyalty and allegiance.

It is your responsibility to determine educational questions according to educational measures and standards. You should leave politics to the politicians and administration to the administrators.

Patterns for financing of higher education have received considerable attention by the Texas Commission on Higher Education and have substantial legislative understanding.

The level of financing is usually the focus of disagreement.

At the same time, the cost of new degree programs, their initiation and approval, is not so well understood. Everyone in the educational world knows that a new doctoral program of acceptable quality adds substantially to costs--of libraries, faculty salaries, research allocations and administrations.

But the costs have never been measured, and institutions have a tendency to minimize the initial cost while a new program is being considered for approval and to maximize the continuing cost when appropriations are requested following approval.

Involved, I think, are several fundamental questions. Is Texas to commit itself to taking doctoral level instruction to the student regardless of where he lives and regardless of his choice of subject? Is every possible program at every level to be offered at each of the 22 colleges and universities?

If this is done, obviously the quality would undoubtedly be poor and the cost prohibitive.

Aside from the cost, the tragedy of poor programs is that they perpetuate a fraud upon those students who complete them, leading the graduates to believe that they have been provided a quality degree backed by the full prestige of the state. The quality of all degrees at all state institutions is thereby weakened.

Now if you enter upon a course that permits continuation or initiation of programs of substandard quality, all of the work and thought and study which went into the creation of this Board will be for naught.

For the first time, junior colleges under your direction become full partners in our total higher educational endeavor, and I urge you never to forget that the best classroom instruction may well exist in these institutions. They are unfettered by elaborate administrative structures, extensive research commitments, and faculty promotions

dependent upon scholarly publications, the junior college instructor can devote his full energy and enthusiasm to teaching the student. He can demonstrate a personal interest. In short, he is certainly the equal of his fellow faculty members in four-year institutions and should be treated as such.

It will be your task and you must see that he is provided equipment and teaching materials comparable to those provided to his counterparts who teach freshmen and sophomores in four-year colleges and universities--and he is entitled to comparable salaries.

A number of Texas junior colleges have been extended to the senior and graduate years. You must determine when this extension has gone far enough to endanger the strength and vitality of our whole educational system.

It is obvious that the expansion of junior colleges to senior colleges cannot go on forever. A second-rate senior college is no adequate substitute for a first-rate junior college. Neither is senior college status a reward for outstanding performance as a junior college, nor is it a trophy to be captured in the political arena, nor a means to transfer the check for its operating costs from the community to the state.

Such a change in status must be determined solely on the basis of state needs and educational criteria.

Somehow you as individuals and collectively as a Board must foster and secure acceptance of the concepts that size is no yardstick of stature, and that, prefixes--junior, senior or graduate--are no measure of quality.

These are some of your challenges, as I see them. I recommended that this Board be given substantial power. The Legislature agreed. How you use that power will be for your determination.

I have often, perhaps too often, used strong language in expressing my views on our failures in education, and I have done this deliberately, and with the sure knowledge that we have also enjoyed many successes in education. But if we have a major shortcoming in the educational community for our state, it is the tendency, I think which is nature, to boast about those successes and attempt to hide those failures.

So if I am sometimes a harsh critic, I hope I am also objective and fair. Because without constant evaluation and criticism, there can be no progress.

In my judgment, we have made more progress in higher education within the past years and have made more in the past year than in any like period of our history. Much of this progress is in money: a 100% increase in college and university appropriations, over the preceding two years a 40% increase in faculty salaries, a 180% increase in research appropriations, a 140% increase in library funds, a 100% increase in state aid to junior colleges.

Now on their face, these are amazing achievements. Yet money standing alone can never be a complete achievement if it is not supplemented by intelligent planning, imagination, careful evaluation, and effective coordination.

You have been given the power to add planning, imagination, and coordination to supplement the taxpayers' dollars in higher education. I trust you will use them wisely.

I don't want what I say here to be strictly from the negative standpoint, I want you to be the spokesman for higher education in Texas--to lend encouragement to our institutions, to praise their progress, support their steps toward excellence, to applaud their imagination and initiative in imparting knowledge, by whatever means to the young people of this state.

And always keep in mind that yours is the opportunity to implement an educational policy that will give Texas young men and women a quality of education superior to any in the nation--and we must never be satisfied with less.

A hundred and twenty years ago, emigrant families on the Oregon Trail, after hundreds of miles on the open prairie, yearned to see Scotts Bluff in western Nebraska as the first real landmark in their journey over the prairies and mountains to the West to a new life. Beyond were more prairies and higher mountains, but the vision of Scotts Bluff gave them renewed hope that if they could come that far, they could indeed reach the end of the trail.

In a sense, the creation of this Board is our Scotts Bluff. The rest of the journey may be even more difficult, but if we have come this far, surely our true promise and our true opportunities can be fulfilled.