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### Title

“The University of Utah: Some Questions About the Work and Worth,” Salt Lake City Rotary Club, Salt Lake City, Utah

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7s92m9k2>

### Author

Gardner, David P.

### Publication Date

1978-05-16

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THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH: SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE  
WORK AND WORTH

Salt Lake Rotary Club  
Hotel Utah  
Tuesday, May 16, 1978

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH: SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE  
WORK AND WORTH

Fellow Rotarians and Guests:

I greatly appreciate this invitation to address the members of Club 24. To address a familiar audience, however, is not without its risks. I may find myself like that statesman of whom it has been said: "He had no enemies; he was despised only by his friends." Nevertheless, I feel very much at home here and am grateful for your presence.

I have only a few minutes with you this afternoon and, obviously, will be quite unable to cover, much less to touch upon, the range of issues and activities involving the University of Utah in which you would have an interest. I shall do my best, however, to make my remarks deserving of your time and attention.

There are no walls around your University. We are beyond neither reach nor reproach, though we should keep in mind that our task demands a high degree of freedom if it is to be done well. Indeed, our task would be impossible to perform if we were to bend independent, professional judgment to the accommodation of either external or internal pressures. We should be accountable to the public for the quality of our work and to our professional code and conscience for the integrity of what we do. Freedom to inquire and freedom to teach are unimpairable requisites to the life of any university deserving of the name. When the going gets rough sometimes, however, I feel a bit like that old Scandinavian convert<sup>^</sup> up in Cache Valley who in the midst of the Mormon-Gentile conflict in the 1880's cried out: "Half of the lies they tells about us isn't true!"

The University is a secular institution as well as a public one. Misunderstanding about this fact tends occasionally to engender a misimpression of the University's underlying nature and its obligations and responsibilities, thus giving rise to unachievable expectations that then form the basis of criticism when we try to

make clear that we are accountable to all the people of Utah and not just to some of them.

As a public and secular institution, every citizen has a claim on us, resulting in what is commonly referred to as public pressure, which by the way, is more often special interest or individual pressure. Precisely because we are accountable to the whole and not, like private institutions, to only a segment of society, we cannot honor every claim. There is no way we can satisfy everyone on every issue all the time, any more than any individual citizen can always be in harmony with his neighbors, his friends, his wife, or indeed, even with himself.

We do the best we can in full appreciation of the need to stretch ourselves to the utmost to serve the diverse needs and interests of the people of Utah. The bottom line for me, however, is whether or not a particular decision will serve the long-term best interests of the University of Utah, while honoring its purposes and respecting its traditions. I can only hope to be right part of the time. I am, in any event, not paid to be happy or popular, but, instead, to do my duty as I see it.

From the many inquiries that reach my office through letters, phone calls, and personal visits, and based upon my own observations as I move around the state --- meeting alumni, parents, students, and donors, and, not least, from your own response to the questionnaire circulated at one of last month's meetings -- the questions I get tend to cluster around ten issues, some of which are more important than others, but all are apparently of interest to the public. They have to do with admission standards, job placement, faculty work-load, Mormon and non-Mormon relationships, the budget, governmental relations and fiscal accountability, inter-collegiate athletics, the Research Park, the Daily Utah Chronicle, and, currently, X-rated movies! I shall deal briefly and candidly with each.

1. Admission Standards. Let us begin with admissions, in this case

admissions to our professional schools and to our graduate programs, almost all of which are authorized to fill only so many student spaces. "Why," I am often asked, "can't my son, daughter, or spouse get into Law, Medicine, Business, Psychology, Bioengineering -- whatever?"

We make a determined effort to be fair, based on merit, and also fair in terms of the quality of the educational experience we can provide. If we admit too broadly, spreading our resources too thin, our standards go down and so too does the worth of the degree. A faculty member once complained to me that he needed a bigger budget to support the graduate program he was overseeing. I asked him how many graduate students were working under him (doctoral candidates, in this instance, who require an intensive, time-consuming relationship between teacher and student). He said thirty. Shocked, I told him that I would have felt sorry for the twenty he should have turned away, but I felt worse for the thirty he accepted. The issue revolves around the question of capability -- the applicants' to do the work and the University's to do a quality job with each student admitted or, in other words, the student's ability to measure up and our ability to provide a program that matches the applicant's merits and expectations. Each discipline has its own standards by which performance must be judged, and students, men and women alike, from whatever racial, social, or economic background, should be expected to master what their diploma professes them to be.

At the undergraduate level, the University's ability properly to assess potential and promise is less precise and less assured. We, therefore, tend to err more on the side of the applicant in consideration of the often undemonstrated potential and promise not infrequently to be found in young people of that age. However, we do neither the student nor the institution a favor if we admit to study those who are so ill-prepared that their chances of success are virtually zero. Such an

accommodation is traumatic for the student and costly to the institution. In consideration of a long-standing need to do something about the falling level of basic literacy on the part of entering freshman students, which has been observed in recent years, the University just last week took action to tighten up its admission standards for entering freshmen. The effective date of the new standards will be 1981 in order to allow both the public schools, students, and their parents to plan for and adjust to the new requirements. Last week's action effected the first such changes in admission standards at the University of Utah in eighteen years.

2. Job Placement. Let me proceed now to the far end of the college career and consider job placement next. We have a proficient Placement and Career Information Center which maintains a dossier on every graduate. Our graduates have historically fared well in the job market. In some years, of course, they do better than in others. Figures for a typical recent year show that placements only three months after graduation were 100% for students having majored in Engineering, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Mines and Mineral Industries; 96% in Architecture; 90% in Business; 95% in Social Work; 93% in the Humanities; 92% in Law; 90% in Sciences; 78% in the Fine Arts; 77% in Education; 76% in Health; and 72% in the Social and Behavioral Sciences. Besides whatever competence they bring to their jobs because of their studies, I like to think these University graduates also bring a capacity for placing their work into a broader context, for understanding the essential interrelationships of ideas and events, for coping with ever-increasing demands on their innate capacity, for working well and with effect, for doing what they think is right, honest, and ethical, and for contributing to their community. I hope their experience at the University taught them, as our Academic Vice President Cedric Davern puts it, "to look back for wisdom and forward for opportunity." I know that our graduates

do not always live up to what we would hope for them, but I believe they in general do. In any event, I am proud of our students and respectful of the accomplishments of our alumni.

3. Faculty Work Load. Although we ask our faculty to report on how they use their time -- what portion goes to teaching and counseling, what to research, what to committee work and administration, and so on -- the picture cannot be as clear, and should not be as clear, as if they were to be punching a time clock. Our faculty are not confined to a forty-hour week, no matter what our class schedules look like. Preparation for class, correcting the work of their students, counselling and advising them, University, professional, and public service, and research all make up a far busier day for faculty than is generally believed. On the average, they work more of a fifty-hour week in spite of what those who prefer to believe otherwise allege. Ours is not an occupation so much as a preoccupation. It is not just a job. It is a way of life. Scientific and scholarly work, whether performed in the classroom, in the lab, in the clinic, in the library, or at home in one's study, is hard, tough work. I respect those who do it well, for it is on their ability, capacity, commitment, and competence that whatever excellence the University possesses rests. The obligation not only to communicate knowledge but to advance it rests by definition on a University faculty. The teaching and advancement of knowledge at a University are what distinguish it from other institutions of higher education whose mission is to teach but whose charter imposes no responsibility to add to mankind's fund of knowledge through research, both scientific and scholarly.

The quality of our faculty rises each year; we have been encouragingly successful in recruiting outstanding people from the nation's leading universities,

coast to coast, trading rather shamelessly on our natural surroundings, the lure of the West and the special attractiveness our valley. But the intellectual and cultural climate is equally attractive and we owe a great debt to Salt Lake City for creating such an environment in which the brightest and the best feel both challenged and compatible.

We have our share of persons who perform less well in their duties than we and sometimes they would prefer. The numbers and presence of such persons, however, is certainly no greater than in any other profession or institution of like kind or size, and we do all in our power to deal with such problems when we find them. To generalize from the few to the many, however, as some take great delight in doing, is unfairly to impugn the worth, commitment, dedication, and effort of a very distinguished group of highly professional people with whom I am proud to be associated.

4. The Mormon and Non-Mormon Relationship. I have discovered that this issue tends not to be discussed in public but is reserved for the more private occasions. How can something discussed so often in private be regarded as inappropriate for public conversation? In any event, I am always asked about it in private, so I shall discuss it today in public.

This tends to be an overrated issue. I do not mean that it is not important to some people, and on both sides of the matter. It obviously is or they would not spend so much time deriving whatever pleasure they take in keeping the issue alive. I conduct my personal life as I always have, living as best I can according to the tenets of my faith. I accord to everyone else the same right. I respect their decisions and their faith whether I agree with them or not, as I expect them similarly to respect



or at least tolerate mine. Growing up in Berkeley, where I was one of four LDS students in my high school of 2,200, I had to decide early, under conditions essentially different from those guiding my own beliefs and life-style, what kind of life I was going to lead. It was necessary only that I be consistent in my behavior. I had to bring thought and action into harmony, as I had to when I attended BYU (something of a cultural shock, having come from Berkeley, I can tell you), and as I had to when I served for two years in the Far East in our country's intelligence services. I have observed this rule of life since coming here. As President of the University, my official acts and decisions are a function of the professional discharge of the duties of my office which are those of the chief administrative office of a public, secular university, enjoying a national ranking for the scope and distinction of its work. Reconciling my private and professional duties has not been a problem here any more than it was during my years of service in the University of California. I am equally comfortable in both institutions.

To the extent that the leadership of the LDS Church has evidenced an interest in the affairs of the University of Utah, it has been only to ask how can it help further the University's stature and standing; how can it be a better neighbor; and how can it assist in improving the educational opportunities of the young people who study on our campus. As long as this issue remains alive here and there on campus and in the community, it invites divisiveness and bad feelings, and detracts from the quality of life and neighborliness that this valley should otherwise have in abundance.

5. The University's budget. "How," one of you has asked, "does the University plan to keep pace with rising costs of operations, when the legislature and students resist the request for increased funds?" You all know as well as I that

with inflation we have to run very fast to stand still. We all suffer the paradox of an ever rising budget buying less and less. Each budget session is a struggle to maintain the level of performance expected of us. The answer to our multi-million-dollar question has to be the effecting of economies and retrenchment wherever possible and educating the public and public officials alike to the needs and complexities of our operation. It is a truism that we get what we pay for. The price of mediocrity in education, as in everything else, is, in the long run, high. In education the cost is particularly high in terms of human potential not realized, high in terms of professional and social services poorly provided, high in terms of research not accomplished and new ideas not pursued and thus foregone.

Here are a few hard facts illustrating why with a student body about the same size as it was in 1971, our budget today is so much higher. The Consumer Price Index has increased by 50% over the last six years, for you in business and for us in education as well. In that time, faculty salaries have increased 47%. Staff salaries have risen by 67% (helping to make up for long-standing inequities between both state government and the private sector). The actual purchasing power of the salaries paid our faculty is less in 1978 than it was nearly ten years ago. Governor Brown of California tried to appease faculty in his state who are facing similar problems by saying that they were earning "psychic dollars," the benefits of being in an elitist profession. The faculty replied they would be glad to pay their taxes and their contributions to his next political campaign in "psychic dollars." I am aware, of course, that the faculty is not alone in suffering from an absolute loss of real purchasing power in recent years. Our society in general is suffering. I only mention it because some have the impression that faculty salaries have gotten way out of hand on the up side in recent years.

The University is a costly, not an inexpensive institution to operate, principally because it is labor intensive and involves the performance of highly trained people using very expensive tools to do their work: computers, scientific equipment and sophisticated instrumentation, books, chemicals, and expensive materials. There is simply no way of avoiding these costs without simply going dead in the water as a viable institution of higher learning. Equally hard, indeed harsh, is the fact that we have had to add as permanent budget increases approximately \$150,000 to \$300,000 annually in recent years to meet the administrative costs of new federal and state regulations. They cost you men in business and they cost us as well. They are costing plenty, both in dollars and in the loss of freedoms -- yours and ours.

Any reduction of budget is not a mechanical operation, accomplished as easily as addition or subtraction, but surgery on a living organism involving highly specialized faculty who are not interchangeable parts to be shifted indistinguishably from one discipline to another as the need arises. A university, like a symphony orchestra, is a marvelous and intricate human invention; you can reduce the orchestra to a quartet and the university to another kind of enterprise, but you will have destroyed its essence and inner life in the process. I am also sensitized to the mood of the taxpayer nationwide and to the understandably increasing resistance to taxes. All I can do is make certain that what dollars we have are spent well and with effect and then make certain that the people's elected representatives make knowing and informed decisions as to the kind of University this state wishes to have.

The sources of money, by the way, to fund the University's operations for the current fiscal year are as follows: 34.2% - state appropriations; 23.0% - federal

sources; 8.2% - student tuitions and fees; 34.6% - self-supporting auxiliaries, gifts, University Hospital, and others.

6. Fiscal Accountability and Governmental Relations. The accountability being called for in many governmental regulations today is too often merely a euphemism for control. Our institutions of higher learning have become Gullivers tied down by a myriad <sup>of</sup> Lilliputian threads called guidelines but in fact amounting to the blatant interference with internal administrative decisions and the authority of our governing boards. We seem to be well on our way to becoming "regulated public utilities." This is not the place to dwell on the sorrows of state and federal regulations, but the bureaucratic burdens being placed on us by virtue of an ever-expanding government is a source of enormous distress to me as I see the life-giving stream of dollars disappear into the cracked and thirsty earth of bureaucracy rather than into the education and improvement of the students in our charge.

7. Research Park. The Research Park was created by the Utah State Legislature in response to a cooperative undertaking among and between the Federal Government, the State of Utah, the City of Salt Lake, and the University of Utah. The 1969 enabling legislation defines the Research Park as one intended to house "research and development facilities, research institutes, testing laboratories, related business and/or government installations, and similar facilities...which shall be suitable or necessary to promote the social welfare of the State of Utah through the advancement of education, science, research, economic development, and related purposes." (Utah Code Annotated, 53-31-58). These uses will be made of the Park until the University requires the land and the improvements for its own academic needs, sometime after the turn of the century I would guess. The City of

Salt Lake makes the investment in the Park's roads, utilities, lighting, and related services and in turn receives from the private tenants occupying the Park substantial in-lieu taxes. Our leases are made on the basis of currently appraised values. Our four basic criteria for evaluating prospective tenants are: (1) The firm should be either research or technically oriented, or it must provide a necessary service to the Research Park tenants and/or the University community; (2) Any manufacturing must be prototype development or the assembly of high technology products having high value to weight and volume; (3) The operations must be nuisance free and clean, i.e., no smoke, noise, vibration, odors, radiation, etc.; (4) The physical facility must be attractive and comply with the requirements of the protective covenants. In addition to the basic criteria, other factors involved in determining the acceptability of occupants for the Park include: (1) Does the firm have a logical tie with the University?; (2) Will the project provide continued impetus and stature to the Research Park development?; (3) What is the firm's potential to the economy of the state?; (4) Can a location in the Research Park be used to draw new industry to the state or prevent a firm from leaving the area? Incidentally, these are even more restrictive than those permitted under the enabling legislation. These criteria have been in effect for several years and we have no intention of making them more liberal. The pace of the Park's development is just about right, and I would not favor a more rapid rate of growth in the future than we have experienced in the past. I am aware, of course, that some business interests in the community believe that the University is intending to pursue a more aggressive and liberal policy in seeking to develop the Park more quickly and in inappropriate ways. Assurances to the contrary appear to be unavailing, so I suppose that only time, coupled with good faith on our part, will make the point.

8. Pornography on campus. I agree with Norman Cousins who said in a recent issue of the Saturday Review that "sleaziness has invaded the culture," that "there seems to be competition, especially in entertainment and publishing, to find ever lower rungs on the ladder of taste...It is almost made to appear," he writes, "that the First Amendment was designed for the express purpose of shielding writers and editors who want to diagram the sex act in print." With you I deplore lapses in good taste and decorum on campus, as I do when it occurs in our city. But I emphasize lapses. Bad taste does not prevail on campus as some letters to the editor suggest; rather, it breaks out now and then like a rash on teenage complexions. We are hardly "pandering to porno," as one letter writer put it when in the last five years three x-rated movies have shown on campus and each one of these had been -- and edited -- previewed to assure conformity with the laws of the State of Utah. Students have manifold opportunities to refine and improve their taste in literature, theatre, and art on campus, as even a cursory review of the monthly calendar of events makes amply plain. There is an almost unbelievably wide array of opportunities available in the form of Nobel Laureates lecturing, and artists and writers, statesmen, scientists, and scholars from throughout the world on campus for both short and extended visits. To condemn the University as a "haven for perverts" as one recent letter writer so phrased<sup>it</sup> because of a film shown on campus to which he took exception, is no different than levelling the same allegation against every citizen in our city because of the presence within its boundaries of some things that do not always please us. After all, our students are your children.

9. The Daily Utah Chronicle. The University, a community larger than all but four cities in Utah, has a newspaper. It is the Daily Utah Chronicle, supported by student fees and advertising income. It is not published by the administration,

even indirectly, but by a Publications Council composed of faculty members, students, staff, alumni, and one representative from the local press. The Publications Council is appointed by and accountable to the University's Institutional Council, the "U's" immediate governing board. The Chrony's editors and writers are students, some majoring in journalism, and others not. As with other students, they are learning and maturing during their University years and their work on the Chrony is part of the educative process. We should keep that in mind.

Owing to the high percentage of our students who commute and live at home, the paper is read as much off-campus as on. It is, in any event, taken more seriously off the campus than on, at least if letters reaching my desk about it are any indication.

Freedom of expression is a cherished American right, protected by the nation's highest law, and like all precious commodities should be used with care and restraint. As President, I expect no immunity from editorial criticism, either on campus or in the community; let it only be in good faith and in good English.

The Chrony, especially in the immediate past, has truly made an effort to more effectively report and more accurately cover the myriad of activities that constitute the daily fare of our campus. The paper will from time to time criticize me as they will others, and it is clearly within the paper's province to do so. It will also occasionally publish an article that is replete with error or characterized by poor judgment and bad taste. I do not like it any more than anyone else when this happens, but it will inevitably occur as it does elsewhere both on TV and in the nation's newspapers. We should keep the matter in perspective, however (please note I did not say we should be indifferent about it either on campus or in our community), and try to remember that it is a student newspaper, providing the campus with a means of keeping abreast of events and issues, while affording some

of our students the opportunity to learn and contribute both to the life of the campus and to their own personal development.

10. Intercollegiate Athletics. Intercollegiate athletics is on the up-beat at the "U." I support it, enjoy it, and am encouraged about the prospects, especially about the upcoming football season. Of our total athletic budget, 60.5% comes from gate receipts, sales, and concessions, 11.5% from gifts and donations, 17.5% from student fees, and 10.5% from state funds. Our expenditures, excluding men's basketball and football (the two revenue-producing sports), are divided on the basis of 60% to the nine men's sports and 40% to the eight women's sports, which percentage happens to <sup>coincide with</sup>  $\wedge$  the male/female ratio on campus. The women's ski team brought the University its first national championship in many years this past season. I am very proud of how well our women athletes are performing. Support for their programs is, in fact, long overdue. Our Director of Athletics, Arnie Ferrin, puts the rationale for intercollegiate athletics this way: "There is a partnership in purpose between athletics and academics, an effective interrelationship that benefits the University both on campus and beyond... . While often more visible, university athletic teams are compatible in one basis<sup>c</sup> respect with other competitive and performing groups such as the debate team, dance, dramatic and musical performers; they reflect the health, social and recreational values of the educational curriculum... . The continuing emphasis of the athletic program is to encourage individual expression and growth, to blend school and community interests, and to stimulate institutional pride and recognition."

In closing, may I just make reference to the three most significant issues facing the University. They are: first, the need to further enhance the quality of our work, to insist on excellence in whatever we do; the second is the need to



maintain the University's essential freedoms in the face of unrelenting incursions by state and federal government; and the third is inflation and the need to understand that the University is by its very nature a very costly enterprise, at least if one is committed to quality and excellence; it cannot be gotten on the cheap.

These issues deserve elaboration, an elaboration that would require another speech, but they have been implicit in much of what I have already said. We very much need your understanding of the University's work and worth. If we have it, then none of these critical problems will be insoluble. Thank you very much.