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"The University and Our Future," National Advisory Council Twentieth Anniversary, Salt Lake City, Utah

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Publication Date

1988-10-01

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THE UNIVERSITY AND OUR FUTURE

National Advisory Council Twentieth Anniversary

David P. Gardner, President
University of California

Salt Lake City, Utah
October 28, 1988

I am both delighted and honored by your invitation to share this very special occasion with you.

Anniversaries invite reflection not just about the past but about the future; and I would like to talk briefly about both.

Twenty years ago, American universities were just completing a decade of unprecedented growth, a decade marked by high levels of national prosperity. But in the eyes of much of the American public, universities were the object of mingled resentment and alarm. Campuses across the nation were in turmoil; civil rights protests, Vietnam, and a host of other issues caused many campuses to erupt in conflict, leaving in their wake a shattered and demoralized academic community at odds with the very people whose support the universities depended upon for their fiscal, political, and social stability.

Students were moving towards the left, while the community was moving toward the right. All of which was both a cause

and a reflection of the alienation between the generations that made college campuses a symbolic and sometimes even a literal battleground for the hearts and minds of our young people. As many of you will remember, it was a bitter, divisive, and terrible time for universities, which were on the receiving end of much of the frustration and resentment the public felt about larger developments in our national life, about which universities could do almost nothing at all.

That was the era in which the National Advisory Council was born. Would you have predicted the campus world you would be facing 20 years later?

Today, universities generally are experiencing steady but not dramatic increases in enrollment, and steady but not dramatic increases in financial support, except for those states, like Utah, that are still recovering from the last recession. A new generation of students is definitely middle-of-the-road politically, if not drifting to the right. Students are more career-oriented, more involved in study, more willing to work within the system than to shut it down. American campuses are, with the exception of tensions among and between different racial and ethnic groups, mostly tranquil; and the generations seem to have gone from fighting over the evils of the capitalist system to more traditional sources of

conflict, such as who gets the car on Friday night.

Most amazing of all--at least from the perspective of someone who worked on a campus during those tumultuous years--universities have gone from being perceived as part of the problem to being hailed as part of the solution. It is becoming increasingly clear, that is, that universities are one of the major means by which societies advance, economically, culturally, and socially. And it is one of the most powerful means for individuals to realize their personal aspirations and potential.

What has caused this astonishing revolution in how universities are perceived? The reasons have to do with some of the larger changes in society generally that have been fermenting during these past 20 years, and that in fact stretch all the way back to the conclusion of the Second World War.

Economically, the globe has become more interdependent--it is getting harder and harder to buy American even if one sets out aggressively to do so, given that the production of a car can involve workers in four or five countries before the final product rolls off a U.S. assembly line. The discrete national markets with which we have long been familiar are becoming less and less relevant to what actually happens in

the global marketplace. Economic decisions made in Tokyo or London or Paris reverate in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake City, Singapore, Hong Kong, Beijing, and Moscow.

But it is not just the economy and our markets that are more global in their workings. The creation and flow of knowledge itself are increasingly international. Revolutionary advances in communications and travel have brought the world closer together than ever before. Harlan Cleveland points out that "a quarter of a century ago, computers and telecommunications began to converge to produce a combined complexity, one interlocked industry that is transforming our personal lives, our national politics, and our international relations"--and, I would add, our universities as well. Students and faculty alike can and do travel with unprecedented ease and communicate across international boundaries with a speed and regularity that are as astonishing as they are routine.

What we are seeing, in short, is a world that is at once more interdependent and more reliant upon information, knowledge, and trained intelligence, and seeking to come to terms with the forces of modernity, i.e., the technological revolution, modern science, and the industrialization of labor. This is the great transformation that is remaking our lives, whether

we recognize it or not. As a result, we live in a world in which education takes on a significance and a meaning without historical parallel.

It is no accident, for example, that two of the most thriving economic regions of the country are located in the Northeast--especially in the corridor around Boston--and on the West Coast. Both have a cluster of high-quality universities. These universities make three critical contributions to the regions in which they are located: they provide young people with the general level of education essential to building their future in a demanding world; they educate the skilled professionals increasingly necessary in a technological society like ours; and they perform the cutting-edge research that more and more makes the difference between economic leadership and economic decline. In the decade of the 1990s, these areas of the country will be among the best-prepared to minimize their economic problems and make the most of their economic opportunities--thanks in large measure to the presence of a strong educational system.

Here in this state, I am proud to say, the University of Utah has long been a dynamic contributor to Utah's growth and development. The University of Utah Research Park has encouraged the birth of some 57 companies that employ 4,200 persons and meet an annual payroll of more than \$120 million.

Remarkably, the U ranks third in the nation, behind the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the California Institute of Technology, in the number of companies spun off from research. The University itself, in terms of the jobs it generates, the funds it attracts both within and beyond Utah through research contracts and grants, gifts, and auxiliary enterprises, is one of this state's major industries.

Of course you know all this, just as you know the countless other, less tangible, benefits the U brings to this state. I am thinking of such contributions as the superb health care available at University Hospital and its associated clinics; the research done at the Survey Research Center to assist state and local governments; the Engineering Experimentation Station's contributions to making the best possible use of the engineering expertise available in this state.

The Intermountain Program in Pacific Rim Relations, founded in 1987, helps to strengthen Utah's competitiveness in a critical international market; the Bureau of Economic and Business Research generates useful information on the structure of Utah's economy, its human and natural resources, and its potential for economic expansion. And of course no discussion of the contributions of the University of Utah would be complete without some mention of its role in

encouraging the fine and performing arts, from the symphony to the ballet to the theatre. Utah would be a much poorer place in every sense if it were not for the uniquely precious resource that is the University of Utah.

I mention all of this because it is easy to forget, or to take for granted, some of the things that make the most difference in our lives. The past five years, during which I have followed the U's fortunes with the greatest of interest, have given me an even fuller appreciation of its uncommonly talented men and women and its consistently valuable contributions to the state of Utah.

Here is a state of modest size, possessing modest means, whose university has over the years made frugal and efficient use of state resources, going on to provide for itself through gifts, through research funds attracted by its distinguished faculty, and through its proven ability to compete successfully with other universities endowed with far greater sources of support. As an institution it has provided generations of Utahns with their ticket to the future, just as it will be Utah's ticket to the future as this state adapts to the winds of change sweeping across the nation's economic and social landscape.

How fortunate we are to have someone with the talent and

commitment of Chase Peterson getting out the word about the many ways in which the U makes Utah a better place to live. How fortunate we are to have organizations like the National Advisory Council, whose support, enthusiasm, and ideas make the University of Utah an even more vibrant and fruitful institution.

When I reflect about the changes in higher education we have witnessed over the past 20 years, the first thought that comes to mind is the degree to which things have changed. Then, open conflict and division were common in academic life; now, we seem to have healed at least some of those wounds and found more constructive ways to deal with our differences. Then, expanding enrollments and similarly expanding state support seemed like the natural order of things; now, we have learned some difficult but useful lessons about making our resources yield the greatest return possible. Then, significant numbers of people seemed to wonder why we needed universities at all; now, significant numbers of people wonder what we would do without them. A lot of change in just 20 years.

And we will see more change in the years ahead. One choice, at least, is clear: we must protect the future by investing in our educational system, including our universities.

Alfred North Whitehead put it succinctly: "In the conditions

of modern life the rule is absolute, the race which does not value trained intelligence is doomed." When the 1990s and the 21st century arrive, Utah will be ready for them--if its colleges and universities are positioned to make the critical contributions that only they can make.

Dedicated people play a key role in shaping, sustaining, and protecting our colleges and universities, and thus our investment in the future. For two decades the National Advisory Council has played that role with vigor, grace, and effect, and I am delighted to extend congratulations and best wishes for a very happy twentieth birthday--and many, many more to come.