COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION

ACCREDITATION'S DILEMMA: SERVING TWO MASTERS – UNIVERSITIES AND GOVERNMENTS

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CHEA

Accreditation's Dilemma: Serving Two Masters – Universities and Governments

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Accreditors and the universities with which they work face a daunting challenge: They are responsible for assuring accountability to the public through traditional methods of self-regulation *and* they are facing increasing pressure from the federal government to impose prescribed accountability measures. Serving two or more masters is not unusual in politics and policy making, but few professions face a bigger challenge in doing so than accreditors. The work accreditors do with their university partners is an important public policy function, but it is a schizophrenic function.

Universities should be accountable to the public. Accreditors are the official link between universities and governments tasked with assuring accountability. At the same time, accreditors are partners with universities. They have historic ties to institutions and are supported by universities through membership.

Accreditors and universities work together to improve quality and certify standards through a system of self-regulation, a system deliberately independent of most government requests or expectations. On the surface, it seems impossible that a self-regulatory system could work. Recently, federal officials have focused on that supposed impossibility and have attempted to rely more heavily on accreditors as government regulators, much to the dismay of universities.

How can the public or government rely on accreditors to achieve accountability given their close ties to universities? And how can universities support accreditors if they are too close to government? Have accreditors moved too far in the direction of government in the past few years? This paper attempts to answer these questions by defining what self-regulation means today, what it meant in the past and how it should be defined in the current environment, and by examining the roots of self-regulation as a regulatory system in a democracy. It is my hope that a careful look at self-regulation and its values will lead to a strengthening of the system and of accreditors' role in it.

There is no way of ducking the accountability argument. Governments, federal and state, and the public are placing huge sums of money into higher education. But money is only a part of it. Attaining a degree from an institution of higher education is the key that unlocks the door to opportunity and a better life. No one should be surprised that the governments, which represent the population in a democratic system and control the latch on the big purse, are being asked to make sure that students are learning and the money spent is not being wasted. Responsible questions for policy leaders include, are we spending education dollars responsibly and if we spend more, what should we reasonably receive in return?

While serving the public master responsibly is a reasonable demand, a dilemma arises when one looks at the processes of ensuring accountability from the perspective of the universities themselves. Ironically, academic

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institutions perform best when government does not intervene in overseeing their core functions, namely definition of curriculum, teaching, evaluation of students, retention and promotion of faculty. But it is difficult to argue for non-intervention in a populist democracy. The non-intervention argument is an affront to public policy making as we understand and teach it in this country. But for centuries, universities have been self-regulating organizations in these matters (in partnership with accreditors for the past 100 years) and have jealously and strenuously guarded those prerogatives... for several good reasons. One does not have to look back far in history nor farther than across the Atlantic to find examples where aggressive government intervention in the core functions has destroyed whole systems of higher education.

To make progress in taming the whiplashes of the dilemma accreditors face, we must make certain that universities understand that they share this dilemma with accreditors. Accreditors' efforts on behalf of the public are also undertaken on behalf of universities and especially university faculty. There is both prestige and practicality in being accredited. The public expects universities to be accredited and governments require it for participation in their programs. Speaking as a faculty member, I can attest most faculty members do not understand or appreciate that accreditors work on their behalf to preserve a system which allows for the continuation of self-regulation. They do not connect the dots between accreditation and the autonomy of higher education.[1]

How can accreditors continue to make positive contributions to the system of self-regulation while being torn in two quite different directions? Part of the solution lies in more clearly defining the regulatory relationship between universities and governments. A clarification of that relationship will determine the future of self-regulation in the United States for years to come. Accrediting agencies should help both universities and governments better understand the crucial role that self-regulation plays in the ongoing refinement and improvement of the US higher education system. However, universities are not self regulating in every activity in which they engage…only in the central or core activities.

We must develop better, clearer and generally accepted definitions of key words and concepts. In higher education, the word "regulation" is used too loosely. In a modern society, all institutions are regulated in important aspects of their activities. Universities are not and should not be an exception to that rule. Governments should examine professionally conducted university audits of expenditures and set enforceable financial standards. Human resource regulations should apply to universities as they do to all organizations; no university should be allowed to discriminate on the basis of a number of social and racial factors. Safety and zoning regulations should be required on campuses as they are elsewhere. There should be no self-regulation for universities on any of these or other matters outside of their core mission.

The areas in which higher education must be self-regulating are those central to their academic missions. We need to define these missions more effectively than we have in the past and set them outside of governments' regulatory reach. Universities' core functions, succinctly put are determining curriculum, standards for student success in completing a curriculum, evaluation of students against those standards, and the hiring, firing and promotion of faculty. The definitions of these core functions can be fuzzy around the edges. For example, in the area of curriculum development, there are good reasons for the states to decide that faculty and its institution cannot offer degrees in "X" or "Y" because the state already has enough of those at other universities or campuses in the system. But governments should not (and do not) have the authority to say what will be taught in a curriculum if the university offers a degree or to evaluate a student's success in fulfilling degree requirements. Further, government should not say a university must award a degree to a particular student, but it can say universities cannot discriminate on the basis of race, sex or sexual orientation in recruiting students for a program, evaluating students and awarding degrees.

[1]This is a common problem. It exists in most developed nations.

The most important steps to help resolve the dilemma accreditors and universities face is to better understand and articulate what it is about self-regulation in the core areas that is crucial to high-quality education. How can one deal with the inherent conflict of interest in a system of self-regulation in the core areas? How can accountability be assured through self-regulation? The instruments most important to this task are two rather vague but very important concepts in higher education, namely *professionalism* and the *peer review* system.

These historic concepts are not well understood by faculty and certainly not by the general public. They need to be better understood.[2] It takes more than faith to say universities should self regulate in the core areas. We must work on ways to articulate what the concepts of peer review and professionalism mean and how they buttress self-regulation.

In the United States today, the extent of self-regulation is remarkable. The self-regulation that universities can and should continue to exercise in the area of their core functions is not unusual if one looks at the regulatory scene in the country as a whole. In fact, in many industries, standards are set through self-regulation. Marc Olshan wrote in 1993, "Private sector standards-making organizations create most standards in the United States. (Olshan p. 319) These standards are coordinated by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) a private organization that is supported and managed by industry itself. There is a clear parallel between the work of ANSI and the work of accreditors. ANSI members work through a system of self-regulation, which it manages. ANSI conducts site visits and judges the effectiveness of the work of its members. An important difference between higher education accreditors and ANSI emerges when government moves to enact into law the standards ANSI establishes, usually through rule making, and follows up with traditional government enforcement mechanisms. At this point, the parallel between ANSI and higher education accreditors becomes less relevant although not completely irrelevant. ANSI accreditors' standards become law when governments license professionals, e.g., in areas from health to plumbing. But it is the private organization which, through self-regulation, defines the standards government enforces. The standards are the product of the industry that operates in the field.

Self-regulation is a central concept in higher education for many of the same reasons that it is in other industries, and particularly in the professions.[3] The first reason for industry and professional self-regulation is that government does not have the expertise or the necessary skills to produce or oversee the work or the operations of the personnel in advanced, technical, even esoteric industries. And there is no practical way for government to replicate those skills and that experience. Furthermore, the self-regulating industries are often characterized by high rates of change and innovation. They employ the intellectual leadership in the field, the cutting-edge people. They are politically independent. Government regulation is not sufficiently nimble to keep abreast of change in a timely manner. For social, political and historical reasons, governments are not generally reliable when it comes to innovation.

One could use many professional areas in higher education to illustrate the usefulness and the veracity of the self-regulation argument. For example, it clearly makes sense for medical school faculty members to decide the core functions of education for their own profession. How could a government bureaucracy or a committee of a legislature do this? Only by somehow retaining physicians to do it, one supposes. So, government allows physicians to self-regulate and then goes the extra step to enforce the self-regulation-generated decisions through

[2]A review of mission statements of accrediting agencies uncovers few references to the importance of and protection of self-regulation and the need to protect this process. One would find the same absence in university mission statements. Mission statements should address the values of the system of self-regulation that universities and accreditors manage together.

[3]Portions of this and the following section rely on the author's work published by Nova Science Publishers, Hauppauge, NY, (2008) Alberto Amaral, ed, *Essays on Supportive Peer Review, "Changing Relationships With Governments in the US: Balancing Quality Concerns with the Desire for Intellectual Independence in the University,"* with Paul Weissburg and Phillip Magness.

licensing and enforcement. Few questions arise from the public about the wisdom of allowing physicians to self regulate in the core areas of their profession. Who would retain a physician trained according the wishes and beliefs of non-physicians? Probably no one.

Similar logic applies to all academic disciplines. Who better decides on what constitutes success in a French literature curriculum than the professionals who have devoted most of their professional lives to study of the subject?

How could a field like engineering handle non-faculty intervention in curriculum development and evaluation? Let us imagine that professors of engineering around the world have been called together by government regulators to produce a single test or curriculum that will encompass every field of study within the engineering discipline. The University of Texas, as a random example, lists seventeen sub-fields of study within their engineering program. These fields vary from circuit design to petroleum engineering. Should a student of architectural engineering be exposed to or tested on her knowledge of biomedical engineering? On what basis would it be decided which subjects are the two or three most important? Would a majority vote of the faculty members in attendance provide a satisfactory answer? It would be a bureaucratic nightmare to come up with a definition of the field, or fields, to develop a test for all students and grade them on that test. Even if it were possible, what would be gained? And, would one not have to go through the process regularly to make sure that innovation was not stifled? The advantage of a non-standardized education system is that students are exposed to a wide variety of perspectives, and innovation becomes a key to progress.

But, is self-regulation sufficient to serve the public interest? The demand or requests for greater accountability are appealing and not unreasonable, especially in the current populist political environment. The view that universities cannot be trusted to regulate themselves even in their core areas, namely in their academic operations, on the surface, seems to make sense. Everyone needs to be accountable to *someone*, after all. Otherwise, what is to stop individuals from doing things only in a self-serving manner? In a democratic system the accountability lines run to popularly elected governments. But not all lines. Self-regulation is widespread in democratic systems, and government itself is prohibited by the Constitution to act in many areas.

Carol Tuohy raised the accountability question and characterized it as a problem in accumulated political and economic power. This narrow but legitimate view ignores the virtue of self-regulation and the problem of too much authority in government:

> The fundamental political issues raised by the existence of these institutions [professional associations] concern the reconciliation of the protection of individual rights with the promotion of the “public interest”, and the preservation of both against the abuse of concentrated political and economic power. The power of professional organizations affects not only the access of individuals to the means of highly remunerative livelihoods, but also the ability of either the market or the state to allocate resources to organize the processes of production. (Tuohy, p. 668)

The widespread efforts to expand access to higher education in the United States, it could be argued, have ameliorated the problem Tuohy mentions at least in part. Universities and their partner accreditors have not limited access; they have, in fact, encouraged it. The 70-plus percent participation rate in higher education of those who complete secondary education at least opens the doors of opportunity.

Others have attempted over the years to better understand and rationalize the dilemmas of self-regulation in higher education by focusing on individual practitioners as professionals. Plato recognized the problem more than 2000 years ago and described it a somewhat a lighthearted way by focusing on experience and wisdom:

> In [a state of democratic anarchy], the master fears and flatters his scholars, and the scholars despise their masters and tutors; young and old are alike; and the young man is on a level with the old, and is ready to

> compete with him in word and deed; and old men condescend to the young and are full of pleasantry and gaiety; they are loath to be thought morose and authoritative, and therefore they adopt the manners of the young…. (Quoted in Brustein, p. 31)

Much later, in 1982, Guy Neave wrote:

> As early as 1798, the philosopher Kant sought to provide a suitable model to balance, on the one hand, the necessary independence from bureaucratic intervention that constitutes the sine qua non of scholarship, and on the other, the requirement that the state have some measure of control over those professions that an American political scientist, David Easton, has termed the 'value-allocating bodies in society' – in effect, law, theology and medicine. These three professions, Kant argued, were the legitimate area for state regulation, since they affected its well-being and influenced the thinking of its citizens. Philosophy, by contrast, did not fall into this category. Concerned with the pursuit of scholarship and truth, not only was it frees to judge the teaching of other faculties, but because Man is by nature free and thus not under any constraint but the one of that pursuit, state regulation in such an area was inappropriate. In short, the Kantian model was one in which the relationship between the state and the university was based on a fundamental dualism, expressed not so much in the field of teaching and learning as in the distinction between those areas where the state might intervene and those where it might not.
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> On one side, for instance, that of the state, this boundary (between the university and the state) may extend officially into the administrative workings of the university, regulating budgetary headings, appointments to chairs where these involve civil servant status for their holders, as well as providing the juridical basis for such matters as staff-student participation and the various forms of governance. On the other, seen from the university's standpoint, the boundary ceases at the point where such matters as methods of teaching, evaluation and assessment of individual work are involved. (Neave 1982: 231-232)

Freidson has also written about the difficulty of professional self-regulation but relies on the experiences of history for defense and to provide some comfort:

> Since Herbert Spencer's work (1896) or before, the professions have been singled out as occupations that perform tasks of great social value because professionals possess both knowledge and skills that in some way set them apart from other kinds of workers. It has also been thought that professionals are distinctive because they bring a special attitude of commitment and concern to their work… (Freidson, p. 2, quoted in Weissburg)

Neave and Freidson ultimately find that peer review and peer assessment help to guarantee quality in higher education.

In the United States, it might be sufficient to invoke the American tradition of limited government to support the idea of self-regulation in universities. One could turn to the theories of democracy, which contain subsets of theories on freedom, the tyranny of majorities and failures of representation. These theories or ideas support the philosophical foundations of academic freedom, the concept of professionalism and self-regulation.

Suspicion about pure majoritarianism is well rooted in the founding principles of American political philosophy. James Madison famously expressed this distrust in the *Federalist Papers,* when he wrote, "If a majority be united by a common interest, the rights of the minority will be insecure." To guard against this potential for injustice, he reasoned, "[a]mbition must be made to counteract ambition." (Madison 1788a) It follows that a multitude of divergent interests will be necessary to sustain a healthy and truly representative democracy; their absence, in turn, could become its downfall.

What Madison described as the dangers inherent to democratic government apply no less to higher education, if subjected purely to popular whim. One can easily imagine a biology curriculum being regulated by law within the United States to reflect a public majority's opposition to evolutionary theory. The intrusion of a faction-driven viewpoint could effectively curtail an important avenue of scientific inquiry. In one sense, self-regulation directly mirrors Madisonian government, where competition between numerous political factions, each potentially disruptive if left unchecked, produces in aggregate a healthy and responsive republican democracy. In similar suit, the principles of self-regulation ensure a multitude of viewpoints, ideas and avenues of open inquiry, all subjected to the competitive process of peer review under the guidance of credentialed expertise. The very absence of an outside government regulator, itself vulnerable to majoritarian factional pressures, sustains this necessary condition. It was largely due to this line of reasoning that the earliest Congresses refused to respond positively to the request of George Washington and others that the United States establish a national, government-supported university.

In fact, most of the Founders of the United States were inclined to keep government out of higher education from the beginning. This decision arose partially out of a healthy fear of centralized government, as reflected in the US Constitution, the Federalist Papers, the Bill of Rights and other important documents from its early history. By the time the Constitution was written and signed, there was a grudging acceptance by most political leaders that some form of centralized government would be necessary, but all involved were eager to limit its powers as much as possible.

The autonomy of higher education was enhanced by the Dartmouth College case in 1819**,** which established that once a charter had been granted, it could not be revoked or abridged by the state [Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward, 17 US 518 (1819)]. The Supreme Court ruled that once a school, church or corporation had been granted its charter, it was free to operate without legislative interference. (Cohen 1998: 59-60) This ruling greatly reduced the power of the state to regulate higher education by establishing that Dartmouth, and by extension other institutions, were private organizations serving a public purpose. That public purpose, however, was not sufficient cause for government intervention. [4]

There are differences between higher (or tertiary) and secondary education which make it difficult to apply the argument for self-regulation in higher education to the earlier grades. One could ask, if government regulation is an assist to quality in secondary, why should it not be applied in tertiary? Many secondary education professionals do not recognize the differences. Yet, the two sets of institutions are not treated the same by tradition or by law and have different missions and functions. Government standards and standardized testing are the norms for secondary education. To strengthen arguments for self-regulation in higher education, we need to better understand why the levels are differentiated; why standardized tests might work at one level but not the other. This is not an easy or popular thing to do.

It is possible, for example, for learning standards to be set for a whole state in math or state history …although with some risks, as have been seen in teaching to the test and other pedagogic detriments. On the other hand, there is no reasonable way for testable standards to be set meaningfully for a whole state or nation at the tertiary level without seriously injuring the quality of the system. Subject matter is too diverse and the very lose definitions of success change, or should change, rapidly. There are large disparities within academic disciplines, even when there is general agreement on what a discipline should be. In newer areas like international relations or public policy, disciplinary boundaries are only beginning to emerge.

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[4]Contemporary examples of their wisdom abound, alas. Simon Montefiore recently reported from Moscow, "When Vladimir Putin presented Russian teachers with their new textbook last year, Stalin appeared as ' the most successful Russian ruler of the 20th century'... And his killings were a tool necessary, if excessive, fordiscipline." New York Times, August 24, 2008, p. 11.

At the higher education level, we have developed the tradition that students have to be or at least should be self-motivated, in charge of their own education. Parents are legally responsible in most states for getting their secondary school children to school. If they do not appear, the state can send out truant officers to correct the situation. Nothing like this, in philosophy or practice, exists at the higher education level. Students are largely on their own. They are offered counseling and other services to assist them, but if they decide a curriculum is not to their liking they are free to skip class, rebel or leave an institution altogether. Completion is not required. Perhaps higher education could do more to ensure completion, but there is a strong value among faculty that when students reach the university, they are adults and should be treated that way, i.e., as independent actors.

Secondary school professionals seem to hold strong beliefs that any person can learn and can be successful in a curriculum. Higher education professionals may or may not share that belief, but most do not believe that every student can successfully complete a higher education curriculum. Even if they do believe a student can succeed in any curriculum, they believe individuals have to march ahead under their own steam to finish a program successfully. Much of the disagreement between of higher education and the leadership of the US Department of Education in recent years is attributable to the differences in philosophy and approach between the two sectors. (The pre-government, professional experiences of most of the Department's top personnel were in elementary and secondary education.)

It is crucially important to the quality of higher education to have the relationship between accreditors and their two masters just about right. Much depends on both strengthening universities and enhancing the role for accrediting agencies themselves. Several proposals have surfaced in recent years to strengthen the role of accreditors. These include taking the accrediting agencies out of the federal funding loop, the idea being that agencies without life-or-death power over the survival of their members would then have the freedom to become more effective critics on issues of importance. Other proposals come out of experiences in the Bologna process countries. One effective example is the system put in place in Ireland about a decade ago. It establishes a quality control office on all campuses and ensures that quality discussions among faculty, students and staff occur on a continuing basis. The system is decentralized and relies on universities themselves to define and implement recommendations. Many Western European countries have a system of "qualifications frameworks" in place. These documents identify what a student should learn in a given curriculum. Qualifying exams are given by a university faculty before a degree is awarded. These exams are read by faculty from the institution within which the degree is awarded, as well as faculty from other institutions. Although there would be challenges to implementing a similar system in a country as large as the United States, the idea should be discussed more fully. Examples of qualification statements for students are available from a variety of sources. The "What We Expect Statement," attached to this paper, could be more widely distributed with a goal of more general acceptance in universities as a set of exit expectations as well as entrance expectations. They depend on self-regulation.

But all of these processes are designed and used in small countries. Adopting them in the United States, even at the state level, would run up against size problems. Even the largest of European states have much smaller higher education systems than does the United States.

The dilemma of serving two masters, government and university partners, can be usefully resolved. But it will take much effort and some time. The attempts in the last years of the Bush Administration to define standards for higher education using accrediting agencies as the definers and enforcers was directly contrary to the history and traditions of higher education. This diversion around history has been noted by a number of observers, however, not always as forcefully as by this one:

> …overshadowed amid the contention wrought by the department's tactics was the reality that college leaders and accrediting officials did not entirely see eye to eye on the issue. Yes, they shared the perception that the department's proposal would represent unwarranted federal intrusion. But negotiators representing the six regional accrediting agencies … were far more willing than college leaders were to

> accept the department's argument that accreditors should demand evidence from colleges that they are educating students, and should have the authority, ultimately, to judge whether a college's results are sufficient. (Doug Lederman, "The Pendulum Swings on Accreditation", Inside Higher Education, inside higher education.com, November 19, 2007)

Experiences of federal intrusion in the core functions in the last few years have raised the issues of serving two masters in clear terms. The books are not closed on this important debate although the Higher Education Act of 2008 gives a boost to the partnership between universities and accreditors. The act reinforces the historic distinction and collaborative relationship between institutional standards and accreditation standards regarding student achievement and seemingly settles the argument about where authority lies for student assessment:

> An institution sets its own specific standards and measures consistent with its mission and within the larger framework of the accreditation standards. In consultation with institutions, accreditors set common standards that are used to review all of the institutions they accredit. The act forbids ED from establishing criteria that specify, define or prescribe the standards accreditors use in assessing an institution's success with respect to student achievement. (ACE Analysis of Higher Education Act Reauthorization, Page 3, August 2008, ACE, Washington, DC)

Much will depend on how the legislation is interpreted and implemented. Demands for less self-regulation and more accountability will likely grow, even with the new law in place. However, there is now an opening for accreditors and their partner universities to work closely together to insist on implementation that is favorable to the ideals of self-regulation. Accrediting agencies and their member universities should find ways to work to enhance quality improvement through meaningful, cooperative arrangements and inform the public that the task is being done. The 2008 legislation should help. There is much at stake in resolving the accreditors' dilemma in imaginative ways that add both quality and strength to accreditors and to our nation's universities.

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ATTACHMENT

What We Expect!

Dear Colleagues:

Approximately ten years ago, the deans of the Commonwealth Partnership released "What We Expect: A Statement on Preparing for College." The response nationally to this statement was extremely gratifying. To this day, we receive requests for copies, primarily for use by guidance counselors in their efforts to map out strong secondary-school programs with students, parents and teachers.

Now, a decade later we send this copy to you as a reaffirmation of our commitment to work with colleagues in supporting the highest quality education for out students. As was true with the original statement, if you or your colleagues would like to make extensive use of this revised "What We Expect," please know that you have our permission to make as many copies as you need. You may also request copies from us directly by contacting the consortium office.

We would be pleased to receive your thoughts of and reactions to "What We Expect." Continuing the dialogue across educational levels serves to enrich our resources and strengthen all of out endeavors.

The Academic Deans of the Commonwealth Partnership:

Andrew T. Ford, Dean of the College Allegheny College
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Gillian T. Cell, Provost Lafayette College
Alan W. Pense, Provost Lehigh University
Jennie Keith, Provost Swarthmore College

PREFACE:

A decade ago, the deans of twelve academically rigorous Pennsylvania colleges that comprise the Commonwealth Partnership wrote "What We Expect," a joint statement on the ways students should prepare for higher education. Prospective students -- as well as their parents and their secondary-school teachers and advisors -- welcomed this clear, forceful statement of what was expected of them.

It is time to reaffirm those expectations. Our revised statement is the expression of a partnership of deans and secondary-school teachers committed to the strongest possible academic preparation for college. Its purpose is to guide high school students in their course selection and to encourage the

cooperation of parents, teachers, and administrators responsible for the curricula of our secondary schools. We are convinced that students who have prepared thoughtfully for academic life at college, and who have chosen the most challenging academic program that their secondary schools have to offer, are far more likely to make a successful transition to the demands -- and delights -- of college courses than those who have not.

We also share another conviction: that every able and motivated student should have access to the strong secondary-school curriculum which best prepares them for college. However modest their financial means, students who have succeeded in a strong secondary-school program are eligible for admission to our colleges, and we are prepared to offer the financial aid that will make it economically possible for them to attend. We urge school boards, administrators, and teachers to offer every able student access to the kind of curriculum we describe below.

HOW STUDENTS LEARN:

We are as concerned with how students learn as with what they learn. WHAT we learn -- knowledge of facts, processes, and concepts -- is critical to success in college. HOW we learn is equally critical. We attach the highest value to the cultivation of such habits of mind as curiosity; independence, clarity, and incisiveness of thought; tolerance for ambiguity; and an ability to solve problems coupled with a willingness to work hard and an ability to manage time. Students will be poorly prepared for college-level learning if their success in secondary school is largely a result of memorization.

To help students develop and strengthen these habits and abilities, courses in secondary school need to be challenging and intellectually demanding. Because we believe that effective writing promotes clear thinking, we expect courses to include frequent writing assignments. Clear, persuasive writing is grounded in the mastery of such skills as analytic thinking, problem solving, the interpretation of texts, informed speculation, and the ability to communicate information and ideas to others. Teachers should assign work which requires students to assess and integrate what they have learned, thereby developing their ability to read and think critically. Those courses and assignments challenging enough to require students to manage their time well help prepare students for similar demands in college. Serious independent projects reward students' curiosity and allow them to demonstrate their knowledge by defining issues carefully and presenting their own analyses and conclusions. Collaborative assignments develop students' ability to think and learn from others as well as on their own. When students question, interpret, and respond to ideas in conversation with others and draw conclusions through group discussion as well as solitary speculation, they are better prepared for the complex variety of tasks that they will face in college.

Activities such as providing service to the community, writing for the newspaper, participating on a debate team, acting in theatre productions, playing in musical organizations, and performing on the athletic field all help college-bound students to strengthen the habits that will lead to success in college. Most students will need to learn to budget their time carefully so that valuable experience in co-curricular activities can be gained without sacrificing the effort necessary for academic success.

We are concerned that the pressures of paid employment during the school year not come at the expense of academic achievement. Therefore, we urge students in secondary school to keep working hours to a minimum while school is in session and not to let work obligations interfere with the academic preparation that they will need to succeed in college.

WHAT STUDENTS LEARN:

We continue to believe that our incoming students need thorough grounding in six specific subject areas: the arts, foreign languages, history, literature, mathematics, and science. Students preparing for work at the college level will serve themselves best if they elect challenging courses in each of these disciplines. Because highly competitive colleges do not usually offer remedial courses, the stronger the secondary-school preparation, the more easily a college student can begin to experience the benefits of serious academic pursuits. Our admissions officers look carefully at the courses each applicant has chosen as well as at the grades the applicant has achieved in those courses.

Although we recognize that no single set of recommendations can address the unique circumstances of each student and each secondary school, we propose the following as goals:

The Arts:

Music, theatre, dance, and studio art enrich our appreciation and understanding of the world. Students drawn to the arts should take every opportunity to develop their talents. All students should learn to appreciate major artistic creations, develop an understanding of artistic sensibility and judgment, and seek to increase their understanding of the creative process. We recommend two challenging semester-long courses which introduce students to the arts of their own and other cultural traditions.

Foreign languages:

Because our colleges prepare their graduates to live and work in a multicultural society at home and abroad, knowledge of a second language modern or classical is an important gateway to understanding peoples and cultures other than our own. Students at our colleges frequently spend a semester or more studying abroad. Convinced that language study can progress naturally from secondary school to college, we expect students to pursue study of a second language through the third- or fourth-year level in secondary school, and we urge that language study continue through the senior year.

History:

We expect students to understand the importance of the past in shaping and explaining the present and to have read in depth both in the history of the United States and in the history of some other part of the world. From their studies, students should obtain a sense of how history is written and should learn how to examine original sources and conflicting interpretations with a critical eye. They should understand history as more than a chronicle of events and people and appreciate the process by which political, social, economic, cultural, and geographical forces produce change over time. They should come to appreciate that ways of living and thinking different from their own have value as human responses to different conditions of existence. Ideally, students should devote two full-year courses to the study of history.

Literature:

Students entering college should have read a broad range of literary works which give elegant and memorable expression to the major problems of human life. Students should be familiar with a number of major works, classic and contemporary, from several different cultures, and should have made these works their own, finding strength and relevance in their words. They should have studied texts in all major genres -- drama, novels, poetry, essays, short fiction, and film -- and should have written frequently about these works, analyzing themes and language, speculating on implications, and using the works as inspiration for their own imaginative writing. [We have already drawn attention to the

importance of writing in the section on "Habits of the Mind."] A strong program should include a literature course in each of the four high-school years.

Mathematics:

Quantitative analysis is crucial to understanding the complexities of the modern world. The use of algebra, calculus, and statistics is now commonplace in college-level courses not only in the natural sciences but also in the social sciences such as economics, political science, psychology, and sociology. Weakness in mathematics prevents many prospective majors in these disciplines from pursuing their goals. We expect students to have gone as far in mathematics as their secondary-school curriculum permits, taking advantage through all four years of all available technology -- from graphing calculators to statistical software packages.

Science:

Familiarity with the basic sciences -- biology, chemistry, earth science, and physics -- has become a practical necessity in today's world. We expect students to have gained this familiarity at an introductory level as well as to have progressed on to a deeper understanding of scientific concepts, skills, and attitudes in at least one science. In addition to a firm grasp of one scientific discipline, a students' science curriculum should include the study of the environment, the integrated nature of all scientific reasoning, and the relationships among science, technology, and society. Students should endeavor to take three year-long laboratory courses in the basic sciences; an additional course at an advanced level is strongly recommended. Whenever possible, science courses should include the mathematical analysis of scientific data.

We have already spoken of the critical importance of writing in every subject area. We remind students here that in order to complete college-level assignments in our six subject areas, they will also need, at a minimum, the ability to use the computer for word processing. In addition, some familiarity with spread sheet and data-base manipulations, and some ability to use the computer to integrate different media (such as slides, videotapes, and text) into project presentations will serve students well.

Most students will have to make choices. Few will be able to take all the courses that we recommend in each area. But we urge students to elect the strongest possible academic program. Students who find success in the kind of program we recommend here will have little difficulty succeeding in college.

We have focused our recommendations on the curriculum because we believe that a strong curriculum plays a critical role in preparing students for college. Still more critical is a faculty and staff committed to student learning. College students invariably point to secondary-school teachers whose inspiration, hard work, and high standards prepared them well for the challenges of their college experience. We offer "What We Expect" as a contribution to the goal of all teachers: the successful transition of their students from secondary school to college.

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