



University Senate Archives

University Senate

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Annual Reports

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ANNUAL REPORT FOR UNIVERSITY SENATE: 1968-1969

A. C. Genova, Chairman

Last spring, when I accepted the office of senate chairman, I wrote to each of the new members of the senate, suggesting that the 1968-1969 year would be an especially important one because the university appeared to be on the threshold of a new era. We had had five years of experience as a state university in Kansas, somehow managing to absorb a massive increase in enrollment without adequate funding, and to learn (perhaps in the hard way for the most part) the subtle techniques of getting things done in the state system of higher education. The important thing was that in spite of the problems and our continuing needs, we managed to establish ourselves as a state university with our own identity. Looking now at these five somewhat difficult years in retrospect, I think that most of what happened over that period was to be expected and was quite typical, because it is one thing to be formally recognized as a state university and quite another thing to become one. It is to the credit of the administration and the faculty of that period that we did as well as we did.

But at the beginning of the 1968-1969 year, many of us sensed a distinct pause in the university's rate of progress, as exhibited by a general attitude of retrenchment--a taking account of our gains as it were, a reassessment of our goals and direction, and an anticipation of an essentially new administration. Indeed, WSU was beginning to approximate the status of a so-called 'big time' school--at least the possibility of this became manifest--and this is why it seemed to me that we were approaching a new era, an era of major university status with all the new problems and challenges that such a responsibility brings.

This brief characterization of our present situation has already been confirmed at all levels and contexts of this university's activity over the last year. In the specific context of the University Senate, several events have occurred which are indicative of the period of transition within which we find ourselves:

(1) Although some of us had misgivings about the stadium expansion program, it must be admitted that the success of this project revealed that substantial community support for university academic programs was now a real possibility; and I believe it was in this spirit and with this understanding that the senate unanimously endorsed the stadium expansion project. (2) President Ahlberg, in an early report to the 1968-1969 senate, clarified the need for a new level of university-wide planning, perhaps involving a new system of priorities, and indicated that the faculty senate, students and administrators would all have a voice in the future planning of the university. (3) The President also indicated that the administration was prepared to consult with the Tenure and Welfare Committee concerning the possibility of establishing more uniform and academically sound procedures by which tenure and promotion are determined in the university. (4) The senate, recognizing the need for a more flexible curriculum which would encourage interdisciplinary studies and the integration of knowledge, supported an SGA sponsored credit-no credit grading system and established an ad hoc Interdisciplinary Studies Committee to examine other ways to develop more interdisciplinary studies at WSU. (5) The senate, recognizing the need to anticipate reasonable student requests and needs, extended student membership to practically all the standing committees of the university including the University Senate itself, and will establish an ad hoc committee of faculty, administrators and students which will examine our present structure of university government with a view to improvement and adaptability to the large state university we have become. (6) This year the six state college and university senates created a new state-wide organization which will speak with one voice for the

faculty of the state institutions of higher education, viz., the Council of State University and College Senates. The Council has already met three times, has agreed to a mutual exchange of senate minutes, and has taken an official position on several matters of policy. Besides the radical improvement in communication among the various faculties already achieved by the Council, I would predict that this Council will eventually influence state policy on higher education on an equal basis with the Council of University Presidents and the State Board of Regents. And lastly, (7) this year, for the first time (on February 19 in Topeka) there was a joint meeting of the State Board of Regents, the Council of University Presidents, faculty representatives of the state university and college senates, and student representatives from all six campuses, for the purpose of informally discussing any problems whatever concerning higher education in Kansas. The success of this meeting is indicated by the fact that the Regents agreed to establish a state-wide coordinating committee, with all constituencies represented, to guarantee improved communication throughout the whole range of university personnel--from Regents to students.

All of these have been significant events which have highlighted the 1968-1969 year for the University Senate. The new senate will have the responsibility of carrying through several of the programs sketched above as well as initiating new ones. Frankly, I found the present year to be a unique one--unique because you will note that the most significant changes had their source not merely in the faculty, but in the students, the administration, and even the Regents. It was this joint effort, this cooperative character, that I found particularly encouraging. Recognizing then, that many of our proposals have this cooperative character and truly represent the concerns of a university (not just a faculty) senate, I would like to propose the following as a set of general recommendations for the 1969-1970 senate:

- 1) To help establish and participate in a university-wide planning commission which will have the responsibility for the long-range planning of the university.
- 2) To consult with the administration concerning the establishment of academically sound, systematic and uniform procedures for the determination of appointment, tenure and promotion of faculty.
- 3) To do everything in its power to see that an adequate disability insurance plan be available to the faculty as soon as possible.
- 4) To consider carefully the possibility of reorganizing the university government structure at WSU, which will include representation of all relevant constituencies while respecting the right of all constituencies to sub-structures of their own.
- 5) To establish the principle that faculty-administration-student selection committees be employed for all significant administrative appointments from associate deanships to the presidency.
- 6) To request of the University Space Use Committee a permanent office (with appropriate files, desk, typewriter, etc.) for the University Senate. We are long past the point where we can expect the officers of the senate to perform effectively while literally carrying about with them piles of records, files and minutes, and operating from a variety of locations at once. Senate materials

should be permanently filed, and an office should be available for agenda meetings, special committee meetings, secretarial work and consultation with faculty.

- 7) To examine again the core curriculum of the university with a view to including some interdisciplinary studies and taking account of some of the problems identified by faculty and students.
- 8) To establish a new standing committee exclusively concerned with ways to improve and evaluate university teaching at our campus. At present we have technical and policy committees covering practically every area of university activity except that essential area (teaching) which supposedly constitutes the primary purpose of the university.
- 9) To examine the status of Associate and Assistant Deans in respect to membership rights on the senate and other standing committees. The original constitution and bylaws of the senate do not adequately determine the status of these individuals who are often half-time teaching and half-time administrative personnel, and who are being increasingly added to our ranks due to the growth of the university.
- 10) To establish the University Senate as a truly representative body which can act for the general faculty on most matters without requiring faculty ratification of practically every senate decision affecting faculty. Our present policy was based on a faculty of half the size of the present one.

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In closing, I would like to say that Wichita State, like many of the larger universities, has become a multi-purpose university; and this means that we rightly are involved in a great variety of projects and programs, many of which are not directly central to our ultimate academic goals. I think that it is imperative that we occasionally pause and reflect on this complex situation, and remind ourselves that in the final analysis, all of these seemingly heterogeneous activities and responsibilities should find their justification in terms of a single goal, viz., excellence in higher education. When we remind ourselves of this, we then think of the absolutely essential condition of this goal, viz., academic freedom--and this involves not only the freedom of faculty to teach, do research and publish in their subject matters, but also the existence of freedom of speech, association, assembly, and other related freedoms for the whole university community, including the provisions of due process for faculty and students. The University Senate, then, has the primary responsibility to protect the university from threats to academic freedom, regardless whether these threats stem from the administration, the students, the surrounding community, or the faculty themselves. I think that the 1968-1969 senate, as well as the other faculty senates in Kansas, the presidents of the state colleges and universities, the student government associations and the State Board of Regents, have all recently exhibited a new level of awareness of the importance of academic freedom and the need to solve educational problems cooperatively in Kansas. There is reason to be optimistic about the future.