

Suggested Quality Improvement Initiatives

1. Reviewing academic programs on a regular basis, for improvement or possible termination

This activity, called for in the Master Plan, has been under way since 1980. The Advisory Committee recommended, at its meeting on May 9, that our current procedure be continued without change. We agree with this recommendation, but note again, as we did in reporting to you on some other matters in May, that additional State appropriations for FY 84-85 will be necessary to meet the original intent that three to five program areas be reviewed each year.

For 1982-83, we have agreed with the Advisory Committee that programs in history and in political science will be reviewed, funds permitting.

We call your attention to the fact that, within the region, a number of other state agencies (e.g., in Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Virginia and West Virginia) are carrying out similar reviews.

2. Raising admission standards

The Commission has acted on the recommendations on this subject. Institutional responses are due by July 1.

3. Providing State funds for endowed chairs

In two states, Virginia and Florida, state matching funds are provided through the governing or coordinating board to institutions for the specific purpose of attracting or retaining leading faculty scholars.

The Virginia legislature established the Eminent Scholars Program in 1964. Each public senior institution was authorized (but not required) to establish its own separate Endowed Scholars endowment fund, committing to that special fund donations from private sources, the donor willing, for the purpose of creating new endowed chairs or endowed professorships. Annual income from each such institutional fund is matched, on a 6 (State) : 4 (Fund) basis through an annual appropriation to the Virginia Council for Higher Education. For the 1982-84 biennium, \$1.0 million was appropriated for the first year and \$1.2 million for the second. The University of Virginia typically claims about 60% of these funds annually and a few of the smaller senior institutions in Virginia do not participate.

The Florida program has a similar purpose but is funded differently. The Florida legislature created, in 1979, an Endowment Trust Fund, funded with a one-time appropriation of \$15 million to the Board of Regents. Income and the corpus of this Fund are to be used by the Regents to provide challenge grants to each of nine Florida universities. Each of these already had in place a quasi-public foundation. Each of the nine foundations may claim up to one-ninth of the total of the Endowment Trust, for the purpose of endowing chairs or professorships, in units of \$1 million, made up of \$4 (Fund) for each \$6 (Foundation). The Florida program thus differs from the Virginia model in two major respects:

- 1) It is a one-time match to the corpus of a specific endowment rather than a match for annual income, and

- 2) Upper limits are placed on the amount any one institution may receive.

The notion of providing similar funds in South Carolina did not elicit any significant support from the Advisory Committee at its May 9 meeting.

The Committee believes that there are attractive features to such a program, however, and has asked the Advisory Committee to study it further for possible consideration in FY 85-86.

4. Standardized Testing of Students

Florida and Georgia are among SREB states employing statewide testing of student achievement as a measure of quality of academic programs.

The concept generated no enthusiasm among the Advisory Committee. We are equally unenthusiastic.

5. Measuring Performance on a Point System, with Rewards

An "Instructional Evaluation" program in operation in Tennessee is unusual. The attempt is made to measure objectively some institutional characteristics related to quality, and to provide performance bonuses to each institution in amounts proportional to institutional scores. Points are assigned to institutions on the basis of five variables:

- 1) Proportion of academic programs subject to specialized accreditation which are so accredited;
- 2) Peer evaluation of programs;
- 3) Relative performance of graduates on a measure of general education;
- 4) Relative performance of graduates on tests in major fields;
- 5) Evaluation of programs by students, alumni, and employers.

The maximum performance bonus which an institution may earn in Tennessee under this system is 2% of its normal state appropriation. The maximum is not normally reached as no institution has yet made a perfect score on the measures which are being used.

Kentucky has looked favorably on a similar scheme and had planned its own version. Those plans have been shelved, at least temporarily, due to the lack of funds.

This concept generated no support from the Advisory Committee at its meeting on May 9, and we do not recommend that it be adopted for South Carolina for FY 84-85.

6. Providing competitive grants

Competitive grant programs are being employed by two states — Florida and Virginia.

Florida's "Quality Improvement Program" allows the Board of Regents to make grants to any of the nine public universities, over and above normal base funding. The Board's intent is to assist institutions in enhancing specific program areas at each, where the Board and the institutions are agreed that the potential for developing centers of excellence exists. Grants for other purposes, including general university support (e.g., libraries, computer systems), are also permitted. For the coming year, the nine institutions have submitted plans calling for the allocation of \$9 million in such support. Just under 50% of this is to enhance specific degree programs, about 30% is for general support, and 20% for improvements in other academic programs.

The Virginia "Funds for Excellence" program also provides for a system of competitive grants which can be awarded by the Council over and above normal base funding. No restriction is placed on the type of activity or project for which funds may be requested, but no institution may be awarded more than 1% of its normal appropriation request. The Council was appropriated \$1.2 million for this activity for FY 1982-83 and \$1.3 million for the coming year.

Georgia's Board of Regents has requested funding for a similar program for FY 83-84.

The Advisory Committee recommended this approach to us.

Acknowledging the difficulty of persuading the General Assembly to provide any additional funds for higher education, we believe that such a system of grants, to be administered by the Commission, would have maximum potential for enhancing the quality of existing programs if it were targeted to the specific area of faculty development. Institutional representatives present at our meeting on June 15 uniformly agreed that relatively modest sums at a given campus can have significant impact on the improvement of instruction, research or public service.

All of our institutions have grown rapidly in the last two decades, a growth pattern that has now reverted to a more normal state. Faculty complements will not be growing as rapidly in the foreseeable future. In this condition, introduction of improved methods of teaching, or of training existing faculty in new fields, and of other methods of helping administrators and faculty to carry out their jobs more efficiently and effectively, are of critical importance.

Recommendation

We therefore recommend that the Commission request additional State funding of \$2.0 million for FY 84-85 for the purpose of providing a system of competitive grants for public institutions, with these specifics:

- 1) That the awards shall be made by the Commission on the recommendation of the Committee on Academic Affairs, and that the Committee will provide rules and procedures to the institutions;
- 2) That the grants for FY 84-85 be restricted to those applicable to faculty development;

- 3) That each campus of each public institution shall be eligible to compete; and
- 4) That no institution may be awarded a grant or grants totalling more than 1% of its State appropriation for FY 83-84 for educational and general purposes.