

A POSITION PAPER OF THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IN SOUTH CAROLINA

"Education is a seamless web."

Ernest L. Boyer, p. xi, High School, A Report
on Secondary Education in America, Carnegie
Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1983.

Foreword

The Commission on Higher Education has adopted an unshakable position that the public universities and colleges of South Carolina should be properly funded if we are to achieve a level of academic excellence in our institutions which will enable us to compete with the region and the nation in educational and economic development.

Our quite scientific and logical method for measuring that level of funding is the appropriation formula which prescribes budgets based on comparable or "peer" institutions in other states of the Southeast region.

While ideally we aspire to compete with national levels of funding, our first goal is to achieve parity with the region. Full formula funding will move us toward such an achievement.

The Commission's recommendations for State appropriations, based on our formula, include only the minimum levels of State support necessary for each of the public institutions if each is to fulfill its prescribed mission within the State system of higher education. Our recommendations take into account different amounts of such basic support for each institution depending on the mission of each institution, and of its programs which support that mission. But the General Assembly, faced with escalating needs of other State agencies, has not been able to provide this basic level of State support to its system of higher education in recent years.

It is our position that, if new revenue sources are tapped by the General Assembly for education, a portion of the additional resources should be allocated to achieve full formula funding for the institutions of higher learning. The timeliness of such a move is apparent.

The Commission is dedicated to efforts to upgrade educational opportunity from the kindergarten to the postgraduate level, but we discourage any plan which sets the needs of the public school system against the needs of higher education.

The Carnegie Foundation Report, "High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America," states emphatically:

"High schools do not carry on their work in isolation. They are connected to elementary and junior high schools and to higher education. In the end the quality of the American high school will be shaped in large measure by the quality of these connections.

School-college relationships can be improved in a variety of ways — each college or university should form a comprehensive partnership with one or more secondary schools."

The author of this report urges the two types of institutions to become "full partners" and engage in "serious cooperation" to improve academic standards in secondary education.

We applaud the idea of the Carnegie Commission and, indeed, believe that significant progress in the public school system will be vigorously enhanced by the involvement of the system of higher education.

Conversely, South Carolina must not run the danger outlined in a recent issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education, which reported that school reforms may sap funds from colleges and universities, and in the long run leave states with a weakened higher education system as an unwanted legacy of strengthening their elementary and secondary systems.

John Augenblick, director of the finance center at the Education Commission of the States, bleakly predicts: "In most states, the proposed reforms in elementary and secondary education are likely to take money away from post-secondary education."

However, Mark D. Musick, director of state services for the Southern Regional Education Board, outlines a more optimistic view: "This is a golden opportunity to get public schools and higher education people meeting together to talk about reform at all levels."

It is the latter viewpoint to which the Commission subscribes. This position paper describes a plan to implement the principles embodied in that viewpoint in South Carolina.

We have said that full formula funding stands on its merits, and we believe that it does.

The institutions, in preliminary estimates from the Budget and Control Board, have been allocated approximately \$7 million in new funds toward formula funding and other programs for 1984-85.

An additional \$26 million is needed to bring the institutions to full formula funding, a sum which is not awesome if the General Assembly adopts new revenue sources in the range of \$200 million, a figure much discussed in official educational task forces and news media.

An allocation of 13 per cent of the new revenue to the system of higher education, while retaining 87 per cent for the elementary and secondary school system, will achieve full formula funding for higher education in the 1984-85 fiscal year.

More importantly, it would also enable the institutions to implement outreach activities toward the elementary and secondary system and participate vigorously in efforts to upgrade educational programs in South Carolina.

The Commission is willing to sponsor an allocation of a portion of the increased revenues for the higher education system to activities for the improvement of the elementary and secondary system, in line with the role of public service which is an important part of university and college missions.

We note that, with the funding restrictions of the past several years, the ability of the universities and colleges to embark on such activities as those described in this paper has been severely restricted. In 1980-81, the institutions on the formula received only 91% of formula funding. In 1981-82, the institutions on the formula received only 82% in the original Appropriation Act, and this amount was later reduced by 2% in a mid-year budget cut. In 1982-83 the formula institutions were again originally appropriated only 82% of the recommended amounts, and this was further reduced by an additional cut of nearly 5% in mid-year. For 1983-84 the State appropriations to institutions on the formula amounted to 89% of the Commission's recommendations.

With achievement of adequate levels of funding, the vast reservoir of talent and scholarship in South Carolina's higher educational institutions can be meaningfully shared with the elementary and secondary systems in the State.

A Proposal for School-College Centers

We propose that school-college partnerships be strengthened. The principal purpose of this partnership will be to provide assistance to those teachers and administrators who are already on the job throughout the State. We recognize that there are examples of such arrangements already in place. But our observation is that, too often, the "assistance" provided by colleges to the schools may be offered in a form and substance which does not address the real needs of the working professionals in the schools.

We also observe that it is help in practical, subject-matter topics that is most needed by these professionals. While that expertise is not often found in departments, or colleges, of education, it does exist in faculties of colleges and universities. In the past, working arrangements between the public schools and the colleges usually have been between the schools

and the departments of education.

Other collegiate faculty members, such as those in business, the humanities or the sciences, have generally not participated. We propose to broaden these arrangements specifically to the end that these faculties play a leading role.

To fulfill these purposes, we propose that there be established a network of six Centers within the State. Each Center would provide for a formal working arrangement between one or more public colleges and individual schools, or school districts, within commuting distance.

These Centers would each provide the following kinds of services:

- 1) Courses designed to upgrade the knowledge of employed teachers.

Although State law requires certified teachers to complete six credit hours, or the equivalent, every five years, in credits relevant to the field of certification, there are complaints by teachers that much of what is regularly offered them by the colleges is repetitious and irrelevant to their actual needs. Each Center will require that the teachers in the participating schools help define what their needs are for assistance in improving the quality of their teaching. Each Center will require that specially-designed courses or seminars or workshops be made available in subject matter areas. Typical and conventional courses, especially those in methodology and pedagogy, will be discouraged. Most courses shall be subject-matter intensive and taught by subject-matter specialists. Examples of non-credit activities in all disciplines could be modeled after the new program sponsored jointly by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the A. W. Mellon Foundation for seminars in the humanities. These seminars will be different from other continuing education programs for teachers.

They will focus on subject matter topics and not on pedagogical issues.

- 2) Courses designed to sharpen the management skills of employed administrators. We believe it is true that the school is no better than its leader. Principals and superintendents are not required by the State to obtain additional credit-hour exposure once certified, but many would profit from additional opportunities to sharpen the administrative skills they must exercise. Courses, workshops, or seminars in such areas as accounting, financial management, personnel relations and labor relations shall be provided by each Center as needed by the administrator in the participating school. Such activities would be tailored to the needs of school administrators, and be taught by faculty from the departments or schools of business of the participating institutions.
- 3) Assistance to the public schools in broadening the offerings of the College Board's Advanced Placement courses available in that locale. Public school teachers offering Advanced Placement courses are in fact teaching freshman college courses in those fields. Few college faculty members are available to assist them. The Centers could provide either "crisis"-type help when needed by the Schools or provide the needed link for longer-term assistance between the college and the high school teachers. In some instances, college faculty may be encouraged to participate in teaching such courses in the high schools.
- 4) Courses, or non-credit instruction, in the use of computers. All public colleges now offer baccalaureate (or higher) programs in computer science. The faculties of both public schools and colleges

can benefit from advice on instructional uses of these machines and on equipment purchases.

In drafting these broad concepts, we have reviewed similar college-public school relationships in several other states. It is plain that many states will move in this direction, as recommended by the Carnegie Foundation, in order to take advantage of the expertise and scholarship which exist in the higher education systems of the nation.

Specific organizational matters and additional services to be performed will be drafted by the school districts and colleges, working with the State Department of Education and the Commission.

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