

# Who Will Plan Tomorrow's



Joseph P. Cosand

In December, 1972, the first Assembly of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges was held at Airlie House, just outside Washington, D. C. Ninety-nine participants discussed the present and projected role these two-year community colleges are playing and the role they must assume within post-secondary education. The Assembly concluded its meeting by issuing "An Agenda for National Action" which included background papers by nine leaders in community college development, and ten pages of general consensus and recommendations.

All who are interested in and involved with community colleges, and indeed with all phases of post-secondary education, should include this 151-page report among their lists of required reading materials. Throughout the "agenda" runs the strong need for planning if "quality of opportunity" and

"equal access" are to have real meaning to present students and to those potential students who have yet to believe that college has anything to offer them.

## Community Colleges Have Not Served the People

For years, community colleges have emphasized their role as "People's Colleges" which provide an educational opportunity for youth and adults regardless of age, race, religion, or economic status. Too often this has been fiction as the colleges tended to emulate the lower division of the four-year colleges and universities. Frequently, community colleges gave only lip service, or apologetic programs to occupational education, developmental activities, continuing and/or recurrent education, and student services.

Yesterday's pseudo - meritocracy in higher education is being rapidly replaced by a realistic egalitarianism throughout a large segment of post-secondary education. The community colleges and technical institutes have been the leaders in this educational revolution but there is much more to be accomplished before the philosophy and

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# Community Colleges?



objectives of these institutions are to be truly realized. There can be no letup in this movement to serve the real needs of our people, whether the needs are occupational, avocational, or social. Each should be pursued in an atmosphere of equality of opportunity.

During the past thirteen months as Deputy Commissioner for Higher Education, I have become deeply aware of the lack of understanding of the comprehensive community college and of the lack of coordinated planning for post-secondary education.

*For the most part, community colleges were believed to be interested primarily in the academic transfer student. This belief was especially prevalent throughout the U. S. Office of Education. There was little or no knowledge or acknowledgement of the role played by community colleges in occupational education. Plans were under way to establish new "models" of one- and two-year occupational education programs as examples for observation and emulation by community colleges throughout the fifty states. Attempts to describe outstanding one- and two-year ca-*

reer programs presently in operation in well-known community colleges across the land were viewed as mere fiction, or at least as gross exaggeration.

The community colleges have not told their story to the planners in Washington, or at the least, their story has not been believed or acknowledged. The creation of a legislated new federal Department for Occupational and Adult Education at the community college level is witness to the fact that the truly comprehensive community college program has been ignored within the Bureau of Higher Education.

Congress acted through the legislative process. How much better it would have been if USOE itself had given proper attention to the comprehensiveness of community colleges. However, I am optimistic that the new Department for Occupational and Adult Education and the Department for Higher Education can together work cooperatively to further the status of occupational education within the community colleges and technical institutes. I am also hopeful that cooperation and mutual respect at



the national level will be emulated by state and local leaders.

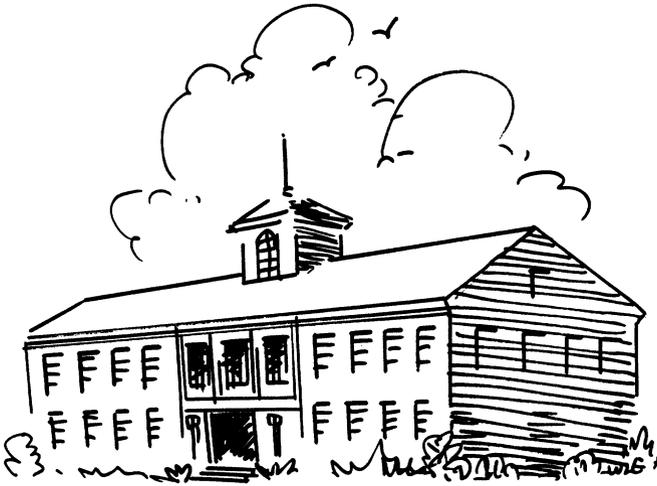
The needless duplication must be eliminated. Cooperation and complimentary programs will save scarce funds and improve the quality of service offered by the colleges and institutes.

It is time we planned, both short range and long range, and established a method of evaluation of our institutions to know if we are doing what we say we are doing. The old evaluation in terms of input must be changed to an evaluation of output in terms of expenditures involved. Faculty degrees, depth and breadth of curricula, numbers of library books, student-teacher ratios, teaching loads, salaries, committee structures, etc., are important but they are all inputs. What are the outputs? For example, what do we know about our students or of equal importance, about those students who should

be enrolled but are not? What do we know about why our students drop out or do we want to really know? What do we know about the importance of the different methods of instruction required to "turn on" the different types of students we now enroll? How do we modify attitudes among faculty members who still cling to the traditional, even though the traditional may well be obsolete?

Who will plan tomorrow's community colleges? Will planning be a mix of unilateral efforts based primarily on ignorance? Will it be by individuals at the federal, state, or local level who, through vested interests and turfsmanship, act through conscious or unconscious arrogance? Or will there be careful planning by people who thoroughly understand and are committed to the comprehensive community college?

To do this will require the best



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efforts of educational leaders at the colleges, by state and federal governments, representatives of national and state organizations, foundations, business, labor and industry, and finally the taxpayer who pays the bill. All of these are involved and the confusion is great.

### Summary

Community college leaders cannot bask in the glory of greatly increased enrollment over the past twenty-five years. Our job now is to plan intelligently and cooperatively in order to achieve our goal which is the stated philosophy and objectives of our numerous and potentially great institutions. There

is an urgency. If we do not act aggressively, this planning will be done for us by those who have their own beliefs and biases which may differ markedly from the comprehensiveness which we have advocated among ourselves for many years.

Who is to plan for and decide the future of our hundreds of institutions which are the hope of millions of our adults and youth? As we enter a new era of employment, cultural, and social needs, it is our responsibility to see that the planners and decision-makers do understand the role we play, and do realize that we intend to be a forceful part of the totality of post-secondary education.