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THE INNOVATOR

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

MAKING BEST USE OF FEDERAL URBAN-GRANT LEGISLATION
(Kellogg Issue III/1)

This issue of the INNOVATOR was originally to be on the desirability of compe-
tence-based education at Northeastern. Given the change in dates of our third
Kellogg conference, however, it seemed more appropriate to print the edited
transcript of Peter Szanton's keynote address at last May's Kellogg Conference
instead. The originally announced issue will thus appear as Volume V., No. 3
in June.

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On May 15-16, 1978, Northeastern will host a two-day Kellogg-supported national
conference on "Making Best Use of Federal Urban-Grant Legislation." To quote
from President Ronald Williams' March 31 letter of invitation, "this conference
stems from the introduction last session of H.R. 7328 by Representative Ford of
Michigan. The resolution would amend Title I of the Higher Education Act of
1965 to include an 'Urban Grant University Act' on partial analogy with the
federal land-grant legislation of the 19th century.... Many individuals see
this proposed legislation as having great potential significance for urban
higher education and the populations it seeks to serve. Yet it is not too early
for members of our communities--academicians, public officials, executives of
business and industry, leaders of civic groups, and other concerned persons--to
discuss the implications of such legislation and to plan how best to use federal
urban grants should the bill become law."

The conference will include presentations by the following:

Dean W. Keith Kennedy, College of Agriculture and Life Science,
    Cornell University, on "Lessons of Our Land-Grant Past"

Mario Anglada, National Executive Director, Aspira of America,
    on "Possible Applications to Our Urban Future"

James Harrison, Executive Director, Committee of Urban Program Universities,
    on "Assuring Meaningful Federal Urban-Grant Legislation"

James Compton, Executive Director, Chicago Urban League, on
   "What the Cities Really Need from Their Universities"

Harold Hodgkinson, Executive Director, Professional Institute of the
   American Management Associations, on "Assuring Best Campus Use of
   Urban Grants," and

G. Robert Ross, Chancellor, University of Arkansas at Little Rock;
Barbara Knudson, Professor of Continuing Education and Criminal Justice
   Studies, University of Minnesota; and Northeastern's President,
Ronald Williams--all on "Federal Legislation and the Future of the Urban
   University, a Symposium."

In the context of this conference, it is most appropriate for the INNOVATOR to
feature Peter Szanton's keynote address from the May, 1977 Kellogg conference.
Mr. Szanton, currently the Associate Director for Organization Studies,
President's Reorganization Project, Washington, D.C., gave a sobering, highly
useful presentation entitled, "Toward the Urban University: the Possibilities
and the Promise." I believe that this year's conference participants will find
his thoughts extremely germane to the matters at hand. All readers, however,
should find his remarks provocative and stimulating in the search for "appropri-
ate education."

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Reynold Feldman, Director
Center for Program Development
Editor

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* * *

"TOWARD THE URBAN UNIVERSITY: THE POSSIBILITIES AND THE PROMISE"
<u>President Williams' Introduction</u>

As someone who is keenly interested in the potential of urban universities to
develop a distinctive mission in society, I'm especially happy to introduce our
Kellogg keynote speaker, a man already distinguished in his field, who only last
week assumed a new position as Associate Director for Organization Studies, the
President's Reorganization Project, in Washington, D.C. Mr. Peter Szanton comes
to this position and to us tonight from a rich and varied background. Born and
raised in New York City, he received his bachelor's degree from Harvard College
in 1952. After serving in Korea with the U.S. Army, he returned to Harvard for
an M.A. in history, which he received in 1955, followed in 1958 by a law degree,
also from Harvard. Then, upon completing a year as a law clerk to a U.S.
District Court judge in San Francisco, he entered law practice in New York City.
Beginning in 1962, for example, he joined the policy planning staff of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, where he
became responsible for NATO planning, and spent a year at Paris NATO headquarters.
In 1966--and directly relevant to his current position--he was assigned to
President Johnson's White House Task Force on Government Organization, the
Heinemann Commission, with staff responsibilities for proposals concerning
foreign affairs agencies and the executive office of the President.

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Joining the Rand Corporation in 1967, he headed Rand's work for New York City. Meanwhile, he became first president of the New York City Rand Institute, a think-tank designed to support innovation and reform in city agencies. Returning to Harvard in 1971 through 1972 as a fellow of the Institute of Politics, Mr. Szanton subsequently became research director of the Murphy Commission on the conduct of foreign policy and in 1976, with Graham Allison, published Remaking Foreign Policy: The Organizational Connection. Most germane to tonight's topic and the concerns at this conference, however, Mr. Szanton undertook in 1976 a Ford Foundation-funded assessment of the ability of the American city governments to absorb and the capacity of universities and other institutions to provide policy-relevant analysis and expertise. The conclusions of this research are soon to be published. Fortunately we will have some of them presented to us tonight prior to publication and keyed to our concerns as colleges and universities trying to do a better job as distinctively urban institutions. So as someone who has also spent a number of hectic, historic years in our nation's capital, it is with great pleasure that I present tonight's guest of honor, our keynote speaker, Mr. Peter Szanton, to address us on: "Toward the Urban University: The Possibilities and the Promise."

Mr. Szanton's Address

Thank you, President Williams. Those of you who listened carefully to that long and flattering introduction will have noted that there is virtually nothing in it which entitles me to speak to you tonight on my subject. If I were talking about policy planning in the office of the Secretary of Defense, or reorganizing the White House, or even managing a think-tank as New York goes under, I might not be challenged within the room. On the subject, "Toward the Urban University: The Possibilities and the Promise," my credentials are thin indeed. I'm not an educator, I'm barely an urbanist. I am further daunted, moreover, by having read the materials which Reynold Feldman sent me. They were intended to provide me with some background on this university and on prior discussions on this topic, but they had the effect of making clear that everything I had thought to say has already been siad. And finally, what Reynold's and President Williams' prior talks have made singularly clear is that whatever an urban university is, it is not Harvard, and Harvard, as you have just been told, is the only university I'm familiar with. So, I will lean on one slender year's work which may yield some insights that may be useful in thinking about the urban university, and its promise and possibilities.

Let me describe a piece of work I did for the Ford Foundation on one of the roles of an urban university, and then try to elicit the lessons of that work to see whether they may not have a broader application to the problem of the urban university generally. I think they do, and if the reason why does not become clear in the talk, perhaps it will during the question period which follows.

It was almost exactly a year ago that I began a project for the Ford Foundation. From the late 1950's to the middle 1970's, Ford had spent some 36 million dollars, by any standards a whopping amount of money, on urban universities—all of it, in Ford's view, with the intention of stimulating more responsive, more responsible university involvement in urban affairs. A part of that sum, a substantial part, had been intended to equip and induce universities to provide usable policy advice to urban governments. But very little usable advice had in fact been generated. The questions put to me were what had happened, and why, and what were the larger lessons of that experience.

As I began to play with this topic, I discovered that there were two relevant literatures. One was a literature of the early and middle sixties, and its dominant theme was "bridge-building." Here were the cities with their terrible problems; there were the universities with their magnificent resources. We must build bridges between the two, to the benefit of both. Perhaps the most extravagant exponent of this view was Warren Benis, whom I will quote briefly: "A generation ago, Washington was the power center where young men could work the levers that had an impact on the world. Today, City Hall is where the action is, and the city itself is the focus of all the major problems. Properly, the universities should be, along with city hall, the command posts of all the operations to reclaim, renew, rebuild and revitalize the city. The city around us is itself a university without walls." This statement exemplifies that first literature.

The second literature is quite thin; it consists mainly of several speeches and a number of magazine articles, but it is quite consistent. It is a literature of the middle 70's, and it says, "Well folks, we tried bridge-building, and you know, it didn't work very well. The universities did not produce much." It goes on to explain why this should be true. The explanation is a classic one: indeed one persuasive statement of it was written in the 14th century, and goes as follows: "Scholars are of all men those least fitted for politics and its ways. The reason for this is that they are accustomed to intellectual speculation, the search for concepts and their abstraction from sense data. They do not, in general, seek to make their thoughts conform to external reality, but rather deduce what ought to exist outside from what goes on in their minds. Now those who engage in politics must pay great attention to what goes on outside and to all the circumstances that accompany and succeed an event. Hence, men of learning who are accustomed to generalizations and the extensive use of analogy tend, when dealing with political affairs, to impose their own frame of concepts and deductions on things and thus fall into error."

That's Ibn Kaldoun, who died in 1406, but who knew about urban universities. More particularly, the explanations of failure in that second literature stress eight or ten alleged characteristics of the academic world that appear to unfit it for the work of providing useful advice to urban governments. One is that the main goal of academics is enhanced respect among their academic peers, not the approval of the electorate or an elected official. The time horizons of academics tend to be long, those of bureaucrats are quite short; that is another. The highest value for most academics lies in originality. But original proposals tend to be unreliable; it takes a while before they get shaken down and work. The focus of academics tends to be on what might be called the internal logic of a problem, whereas problems of the real world come not only with internal characteristics but with external settings--the politics, the bureaucratics, the financing of solutions. Academics tend to work solo, whereas the most effective work in the political realm is collaborative. The mode of expression of academics is typically complex and qualified; as simple and absolute statements are generally more useful in political discourse. The form of conclusions to which academics naturally tend often involves discussions of choice among alternatives depending on objectives, with high emphasis on the uncertainties involved, but in the political world one invariably hears that a single course is essential to pursue, objectives are rarely specified, and uncertainties are submerged. Academics tend to be relatively unconcerned with feasibility, and are not likely to be available to help when three years later, the city agency struggling to apply their advice, needs additional help. They are gone on

sabbatical, or graduate students who actually did the work have changed majors, or had a crisis of careers, or are off on summer vacation, or (less probably) are submerged in their schoolwork.

For all these reasons, this second literature alleges academics are simply inherently unsuited for the provision of genuinely useful advice.

As I reviewed the evidence of academic attempts to provide advice to urban decision-makers, I found that patterns of failure were obvious enough. There seemed to me to have been three kinds of activities, and failure predominated in each. There were the so-called "urban centers" that began springing up in universities all over the country, beginning in the mid-sixties. It was not at all clear what their purpose was, especially in their early forms. Most such centers either attempted to "coordinate" urban-related work in the standard academic departments, or stood simply as receptacles for external funding. Very few of them pssessed the power to hire teachers or researchers, or to promote or fire those hired by the departments. They were largely empty boxes, and well deserved the treatment they were accorded in a satirical 1970 article in Science Magazine: Question: "'Specifically, what are some of the examples of the center's work?' Answer: 'Well, the center staff members have resolved the conflict between teaching and research.' Question: 'How?' Answer: 'By doing neither.'" (Forgive me; this is all in the family.)

Secondly, a number of universities participating in ambitious national programs of urban involvement, typically funded by the federal government. The Urban Observatories come to mind; USAC and the Urban Technology System are examples. Finally there were, and still are, home-grown local efforts, independent of the "urban centers." In almost every American university during the 1960's and early 1970's, some effort to provide some form of intellectual assistance to a local government took place. In motivation, style, intensity, subject, duration and outcome, those efforts were enormously diverse. Some enjoyed the support of deans and presidents, some proceeded despite their opposition. Some were based in interdisciplinary public policy centers, others in extension divisions or in traditional departments. Some enjoyed lavish financial support from state or federal agencies or from foundations--but never from cities, it's interesting to note--others scrounged funds, bootlegged professional time, and impressed student volunteers. Some were grandiose in conception, others were modest. Some drew on genuine and well-tested fields of expertise, others on sciences whose first principles remain to be discovered. But it was true for most of them that the value to local officials of what they received was low.

Let me descend a little from this level of generality, and tell you three stories which, I think, typify the record I'm generalizing about. The first involves Tulsa, the second Cleveland, and the third the City of New York.

In 1962, with Ford Foundation funding, the University of Oklahoma began a pro- gram in what was called "urban science." "The object of the urban science program," said its literature, "is to erect a platform for a comprehensive, holistic approach to urban problems and to elevate the study and remedy of urban problems to a science. An intervening urban scientist is to be placed in each extension office to work for developing closer university/community relationships."

By the university's own standards, the program was only a very limited success. The urban scientists and their graduate students were pressed to perform odd

jobs and data gathering, but the city departments for which they worked con-
tinued to regard their own responsibilities as quite independent of any holistic
approach. The Ford grant expired in 1964. In the following year, however, the
Higher Education Act in 1965 was passed, and Title I authorized, as you know,
grants to strengthen university/community service programs. The University of
Oklahoma then organized a consortium which included Tulsa University, Langston
University, a predominantly black school, Oklahoma State, and the City of
Tulsa. The consortium received a Title I grant which was supplemented by a
small $20,000 grant from the City of Tulsa, and set to work. General supervi-
sion was provided by an advisory council composed of a senior administrative
official from each of the universities and an equal number of civic leaders,
none of them, however, city officials. The project was headed by a full-time
project director, with a small staff of his own, and employed some five or six
so-called Professors of the City. The professors were to provide research and
planning expertise to various community agencies.

The activities that the professors actually undertook varied greatly. The
largest in scale was their work to meet the elaborate planning and citizen
participation requirements of Tulsa's Model City's application. The application
was successful, and the professors' leadership in preparing it was widely
acknowledged. But prolonged conflict among various community groups and between
those groups and city agencies had led the professors to take sides in various
disputes. By the end of the Model Cities application process, the professors
were seen by city government as "agents of change, rather than resources for
assistance." That image was made all the more vivid by the sympathetic account
one professor wrote of Tulsa's youth culture. From 200 unstructured interviews,
he produced a book called, Talking with Tulsa Teens, a wholly uncensorious
report on teen-age drinking, drug-abuse, shoplifting, exasperation with adult
values, and alienation from public institutions. The book was issued in paper-
back and widely read. In both findings and tone, it was regarded by the city
establishment as scandalous.

Some work in the project was more directly useful to Tulsa's government. The
professors, for example, conducted management seminars for city executives and
produced various reports for Tulsa's health and welfare agencies. Unfortunately,
more characteristic were an effort to create a Tulsa ecumenical center, devoted
to "the making of one spirit through the coordination of diverse interests in
the well-being of the people of greater Tulsa," and a "psyche of the city"
project which in ten two-hour sessions sought to have its twenty participants
do the following: "confront specific problems as they actually occur in Tulsa
and evaluate those problems in the holistic thinking of leading societalists,
ethologists, oxologists and mystigogues, thereby becoming aware of (1) the
complexity of the problems (2) the effect of their own pre-dispositions on
interpreting and solving the problems, and (3) the need for a rational context
in which to deal with the problems." The Professors of the City program
terminated, as one might expect, as soon as federal funding ran out. Support
from Tulsa's business community or government proved impossible to elicit. The
Model City planning documents, the raised consciousness of some and the out-
raged expectations of others were the program's only monuments.

The second story took place in Cleveland. When the federal Urban Observatory
program began, Cleveland might reasonably have been picked as a probable
success. The troubled city was under pressure to reform and seemed open to
innovation. Carl Stokes, its first black mayor, had recruited a new set of
predominantly young and energetic department heads. The compact business

establishment of the city might have been expected to support re-thinking of policies and programs. Of the two universities then interested in participating, one, Case Western Reserve, possessed great and potentially useful capacity in engineering, and the other, Cleveland State, had a strong urban orientation, a mid-city location, and an almost wholly local student body. But Roy Crawley, president of the National Academy of Public Administration and leader of the NAPA team which evaluated the Observatory, found instead that "Cleveland was a disaster."

Why? Composition of the Observatory's board was probably the first error. It was dominated by city agencies, containing four agency heads as against one middle-level administrator for each of the participating universities. But it failed to represent either the mayor's office or the city council or the county or state governments. And none of the agency heads on the board regarded the Observatory as significant. A larger problem was the absence of a strong director. Managing the relationships among institutions as diverse in values, preoccupations, styles, and objectives as universities and municipal depart- ments is hard, sensitive, and full-time work. But the Observatory's first director was a Cleveland State graduate student with little experience in the city's government. The first result was that differences over whether Observa- tory studies could be published held up the Observatory's formal establishment for months, during which the attitude of city officials moved from skepticism to disinterest. Control of the Observatory then fell by default to the universities and largely to CSU, where Observatory funds were needed to support a struggling institute of Urban Studies. Since urban studies offered little promise of academic prestige or advancement, the academics drawn to them were principally undergraduate and graduate students and junior faculty, principally in the social sciences. Their work proved uneven in quality, and since informal interaction with city officials had broken down, it also proved maladroit politically. After one evaluation of Cleveland's Manpower administration, the head of CSU's Urban Studies program remarked, "No one at Manpower will ever want to work with anyone at the University again." Similarly, a citizen parti- cipation study was undertaken in the district of a councilman who had not been consulted beforehand and who regarded it as threatening. He became a persis- tent critic. When the Stokes administration was succeeded by a more traditional regime, control over the Observatory shifted to a private university which was politically allied to the new administration, but little substantive work was performed. "This administration has no interest in technical competence; it's a job-distribution enterprise. Representatives of various voting groups are appointed to key jobs, and they're trusted because they won't make waves. Why pay good money to hire somebody from the university to find out something damaging?" (?!) This is the summary of one informed insider. Agreeing entirely with Crawley's assessment, Norman Crumholtz, Cleveland's planning director and a former chairman of the Observatory's policy board, concluded flatly, "The Observatory was a waste of time."

Here's the last of the three stories. New York City's Department of Sanitation in 1970 was an unlikely client for university-based research. It consisted of some 11,000 employees who looked to a tough, resourceful, politically powerful union boss for leadership; tolerated little management from departmental super- iors; disposed of some 20,000 tons of garbage and refuse daily; absorbed a budget of some $200,000,000 annually; and followed work patterns essentially unchanged for forty years. But it was also true that the Department was burdened each year with large increases in the amount of waste the city

generated, increases larger than could be continuously accommodated by simply enlarging the sanitation work force. At the same time, the administration of Mayor Lindsay was determined to achieve efficiency gains throughout the city government and was seeking to draw on many sources of external advice and expertise. Meanwhile, early in 1970, a program for urban and policy sciences had been established at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. The Stony Brook campus, well east of Manhattan on Long Island, housed the one graduate center of the fast-growing State University of New York that was focused on the hard sciences. The purpose of the new program was, principally, to train policy analysts through a two-year master's course in economics, statistics, mathematics and engineering. But the program had been established by new faculty deeply interested in performing useful research for local governments, and it was well designed to serve that purpose. The program had obtained the authority to hire, promote and fire its own faculty, even where appointments were made jointly with traditional departments, and it enjoyed strong support from the university's president. A three-month internship with a government agency was part of the curriculum, and a two-year $500,000 grant from the National Science Foundation was available to support full-time research associates. The program was thus equipped with motivation, money and quantitative analytic skills. What it lacked was a client.

Stony Brook faculty introduced themselves, late in 1970, to officials of the Department of Sanitation and proposed to perform various analyses. The response was skeptical. The academics persisted. They offered to address problems of interest to the Department, whatever they were, and to meet rigid time deadlines in proposing solutions. As it happened, the Department faced several problems that were technical as well as political and in their technical aspects were well within the competence of the Stony Brook researchers to address. One of them was whether changes in work schedules could simultaneously produce productivity gains and appear attractive to the union. The city's own analysts, lodged the Environmental Protection Agency, the super-agency within which the Department of Sanitation was lodged, had noted this anomaly: sanitation work schedules called for crews of identical size Mondays through Saturdays. But the volume of refuse to be collected varied markedly by the days of the week, and in a quite predictable pattern. Mondays were heavy load days, the mid-week was light. Under the practices then in use, night and Sunday collections were used to take up the extra loads. But these were paid for at overtime rates. So they were expensive to the city; they were also resented by some of the men.

A number of favorable conditions were now conjoined. One was that, as one participant remarked, here was a problem that a linear programming model could fit. For another, the Stony Brook analysts wanted no fee; their NSF funding sufficed. A third was that pressure for some change in collection practices was already strong. Another was that the department's own staff understood what form a useful analysis would have to take. Indeed, a young graduate student in economics serving as a summer intern to EPA's analytic and planning staff was assigned to specify the nature of the questions to be answered, alternative solutions already considered, and statutory and political constraints that would affect the answer. The resulting 20-page paper defined the task the analysts would have to face with rare precision. Thus guided, Stony Brook professors, research associates and graduate students systematically compared the probable costs and benefits of hiring additional men, regularizing overtime, or skewing the shifts to provide more men during regular hours on peak-load days. By a demonstrable margin of five million dollars annually, the last alternative proved preferable.

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But there were many working-level problems with such a reform: the re-arranging
of car pools, re-scheduling of special assignments and the like. So lingering
union opposition produced repeated postponements of the switch to new work
schedules. At this point, the academics, having worked out and presented the
"right" answer might well have considered their work done. Instead, uncharacter-
istically, Stony Brook assigned a new staff member to work full-time in one of
the department's 68 districts, to get the details taken care of until that
district was prepared to test the new plan. It took a year before that district
was ready to run the test. When it ran, it proved successful. And very soon
thereafter, the new schedule was adopted city-wide. (Changes in the city's
political leadership, and simultaneous shifts in the research interests of
Stony Brook's faculty, many of whom were now concerned with energy issues on the
national level, shortly thereafter ended the university's relationship with the
Department of Sanitation. But the change in shifts stuck, and it worked.)

What I have found in these case reviews, as I've said, was a predominant pattern
of failure. Stony Brook was a clear exception. But what I also came to believe
was that the standard explanation, focusing so hard on the nature of the academic
culture, was a partial explanation only and a quite deceiving one. What it
ignored was that universities were trying to do something which was extraordi-
narily difficult. What it observed was that the deeper cause of failure lay
elsewhere. Seven bodies of evidence suggest that. One is typified by my own
experience, with the Rand Corporation, in New York. It was not simply universi-
ties during the 60's and 70's which were trying to provide useful advice to
urban governments. Lots of other institutions were trying to play the same
game. The New York City-Rand Institute was one. McKinzie and Company, also
mainly in New York, was another. The Los Angeles Technical Services Corporation,
an organization set up expressly to bring to bear the technical skill and
management competence of the aerospace industry on problems of the city of
Los Angeles, was a third. Arthur D. Little worked out the comprehensive Community
Renewal Program for the city of San Francisco. Consad did the same in Chicago.
The point about all those efforts is that, in the main, they were failures. The
New York City-Rand Institute no longer exists. L.A.T.S.C. no longer exists.
McKinzie has withdrawn entirely from work with New York City. The ADL and
Consad work has been forever impaled by a brilliant account of what went wrong
written by Gary Brewer, called Politicians, Bureaucrats and the Consultant.

But these failures cannot be explained in terms of the differences between the
bureaucratic or political culture of city governments and the academic culture
of the provider of advice. These firms were not more interested in publishing
papers or educating graduate students, or eliciting the approval of academic
peers; they were professionals in the giving of advice to decision-makers. And
they were quite successful advisors: Rand to various federal agencies; the
aerospace technologists to NASA and private industry; McKinzie, and ADL as
management consultants. But in cities they all had terrible problems. It made
me wonder whether the cities were somehow the problem. So I looked back at the
record of universities to see whether they did any better in providing advice
to other kinds of clients. The apparent answer is yes. The linkages between
various graduate schools and industry are long and by and large productive, or
are so regarded by the clients. The relations between schools of business and
of engineering and the private sector are the most obvious cases. If business
and engineering are discounted as not mainline academic disciplines, then
consider the work that academic economists routinely do for banks and for
industry. Think of geologists and the extractive industries. These are rela-

tions which are thought to be useful by the clients, and they are certainly remunerative to the advisors. University-based analyses performed for the federal government, while there is some dissatisfaction with it, is also by and large regarded by its clients as more useful and more effective than the work for city governments has proven. Even at the state government level, though again there is much wasted motion and much unused research, the record is clearly superior to that involving cities.

Finally, though the evidence here is thin, where one can find urban officials who are truly savvy consumers of research, who know what their problems are, who know what kinds of talents it will take to deal with them, who can make academics and their own officials interact effectively--such officials are able to draw useful advice not only from commercial management consulting firms and professional research organizations, but also from universities. The best example I know of such a fellow is named Bill Donaldson, now city manager of Cincinnati and previously city manager of Tacoma and before that in Scottsdale, Arizona. He's brilliant at this game, and he can make universities and university-based consultants produce for him, just as he can make other kinds of advisors produce for him.

What's the conclusion? The conclusion, or one of the conclusions, I came to is that the explanations of the failed relationship between universities and city governments which focussed simply on the characteristics of one party to the relationship, the academics, conceal more than explain. It takes two to relate, and if the problem can be assigned to either side, it probably lies not at the university's door but at that of the urban government. As consumers of advice city governments are weak and unskilled, unaware of which problems are likely to benefit from research and analysis, unaccustomed to contracting for it, unused to establishing the conditions under which research can be done productively, unwilling to let the secrets of the trade leave city hall, in short, very hard clients to help.

But there is another and more hopeful conclusion to be drawn. It is that some providers of analysis and research have been able to work effectively for city governments, and the characteristics which seem to account for their success can be identified. Recall the Stony Brook story. It's clear that there the research, technically competent and clearly relevant though it was, would have failed to produce any real change in city practice had the university not done something unusual for advisors. It did not simply give its advice and walk away. What did it do? It set somebody to work, for a year, on its own funding, at the lowest working level of the department it was dealing with, to work out the glitches and the bugs, to reassure, to push, to help manage the process of change. There weren't many glitches, there weren't many bugs, but the people in the Department simply were not ready to try a large new idea until they walked around and around it, looked at it from underneath and looked at it from above, and decided it was safe. And then they still weren't ready, until they had help in trying it out. The university took a long extra step.

Another example is provided by the Economic Development Council in New York. The Council is an association of businessmen committed to the vitality of the city and concerned for the efficiency of the city government. They look for management deficiencies in city agencies, but when they see deficiencies due to desperately inadequate staffing, they offer to lend appropriately trained executives to the agency. In the case of New York's Human Resources Administra-

tion. Several years ago, what the EDC did was to design a simple management information system. When it turned out that few people in that department knew how to use it, the Council provided executives--both to run the system and at the same time to train their replacements. That worked very well.

Another example can be drawn from the work of an organization called the Vera Institute of Justice, which I know some of you are familiar with. Vera has specialized in ameliorating problems of criminal justice. Politically and bureaucratically, Vera is remarkably skillful. One example: New York City jails in the late 1960's were terribly overcrowded. It was obvious why. The crime rate was up, and the period between arrest and time of trial was long and growing longer. So a growing number of persons accused of crimes and unable to make bail were going to jail and staying there longer. Indeed some people were spending longer in jail before trial than they could have been sentenced to spend in prison had they been convicted of the offenses they were charged with. No one had to discover the problem; it was known. No one even had to invent a solution; many had been proposed. The problem was to try a solution.

One obvious solution was to find a way to identify those prisoners who even though they could not make bail, seemed good bets to turn up to trial because they had stable family histories, jobs, and known addresses. Such prisoners might then be released on their own recognizance. But the court system did not have the staffs to determine which prisoners would fit those criteria and which would not. Vera didn't table a report telling the city what it should do. It provided the necessary funds from private sources, and then offered to provide the city with staff members to do the assessments, prisoner by prisoner. No power was to be taken away from the judges--they would still make the decisions. Finally, Vera made it clear that if the experiment failed, Vera would take the blame, but if it succeeded, the court system--the chief judges especially-- would have to accept the credit since the ultimate responsibility was theirs. On that basis it was acceptable, it was tried, and it worked like a charm.

Those three examples of success strike me as interesting. There are common principles working in each of them, I think. One of them is that the advising institutions were oriented toward outcomes, not toward inputs. They were con- cerned with what would actually happen in some piece of city government, not with producing something of their own--a report, or an idea, or a supported graduate student. Secondly, their goals were quite specific. They were not to "improve urban life" or "to make a better city." They were to reduce the number of people in jails by X amount by Y date. Or to establish a minimally function- ing management control system in a human resources department. Or to get the work schedule changed in the Sanitation Department. They were goals, limited enough so that they might be accomplished, and specific enough so that you could tell, a year later, whether they had been accomplished or not. Thirdly, the advice-providing institutions were able to provide resources to the city at less than their real cost. At bottom, their real business was lowering the cost of innovation to the city. They were lowering not merely financial costs, but the costs in managerial talent--in very short supply in most urban governments--and the cost in terms of political risks. They took the risks. They did the man- agement. And they paid the bill, or most of it.

That is hardly the traditional role for a giver of advice. Traditionally, the advisor is sharply distinguished from the decision-maker or the doer. The decision-maker poses a problem. The advisor accepts it, retires, and thinks. He

reaches a conclusion, and then presents that conclusion to the decision-maker. His job is then done, and he departs. And the decision-maker, the elected or appointed official, makes a decision and either puts the conclusion into effect or not. That is the traditional model. Each of the three organizations which turned out to be genuinely helpful rejected that model. They understood that advice-giving and decision-making are neither autonomous nor separate acts but are processes, and they interact, their boundaries overlapping. And the less capable, less sophisticated the decision-maker, the larger the role the advisor must assume.

Well, one always approaches a large subject not in terms of its full breadth, but in terms of what one knows. That is what I've tried to do with the urban university, its problems and promise. Obviously, the urban university, whatever it is, must provide far more than policy advice to urban government. That will be one of many roles. But it may be true--I believe it is--that the characteristics which make universities (and other institutions) successful at advising urban governments will also make for success in the other roles of an urban university. The principles I've tried to derive from these case-histories can be stated more broadly and will apply more broadly. They are these: Don't start from the general; there are very few global solutions. Know your client; understand his needs and his limitations. Fit your role to his capacity, and if that means inventing a nontraditional role, do so, knowing that this will require sacrifice and extra effort. Care not merely about how well you're doing, but how well he's doing. Focus on results, on outcomes, not inputs. Perhaps the final principle is that one never adapts completely, and once and for all. One must keep adapting.

I think those are hard lessons, very hard lessons. There are few institutions which have within them the intellectual, the material, the financial, the experiential resources to act on such principles. But it behooves the rest of us, if we are serious about playing a useful urban role, to come as close as we can.

--keynote address delivered by Peter L. Szanton
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NEXT...   Competency-Based Education at UNI: A Faculty Forum Issue