

1980

## The Innovator- Sep/Oct. 1980

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### Recommended Citation

Feldman, Reynold, "The Innovator- Sep/Oct. 1980" (1980). *The Innovator: Newsletter for the Center for Program Development*. 39.

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# THE INNOVATOR

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

VOLUME VII  
NUMBER 2

NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
Chicago, Illinois 60625

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER  
1980

## UNI's INNOVATIVE BEGINNINGS

Excerpts from Melvin George's Dissertation

At the opening of this decade as at the opening of any decade, it is popular to look ahead and predict the shape of the future. Few counsel looking back. Yet, as my young son says, we study history so that "we learn not to put our hand in the fire." Donald Klein in Concepts for Social Change (Klein, 1966) suggests that if change-agents do not listen to the defenders of the status-quo, they are likely to produce change which threatens the very integrity of the system. On a more positive side, a study of the history of an institution may often prove to be inspirational. Such is truly the case at Northeastern Illinois University, a young institution founded on the concepts of excellence and innovation in higher education.

My own academic interests in how organizations provide for and adjust to change as well as my need as a newcomer to UNI to understand this particular institution led me to read Mel George's dissertation, Northeastern Illinois University: The History of a Comprehensive State University. I had intended to skim the document to put facts and dates in order but soon found myself so fascinated and caught up in the energy and inspiration of the early days of Northeastern that I read the entire 600-odd pages.

A word or two about Mel George himself seems in order here. Dr. George came to Northeastern in 1974 as the Director of the University Library. In 1978 he assumed directorship of the reorganized area of Library and Learning Services. He had previously served nine years at Elmhurst College as the librarian there. His dissertation completed a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in 1979.

It is not, of course, possible to reproduce the entire dissertation in the INNOVATOR; thus, I have selected those portions which delineate UNI's innovative beginnings and events which led to the establishment of the Center for Program Development (CPD). In my own research I hope to show how, through a closer examination of the Program for Interdisciplinary Education and the Kellogg Fellows Program, both parts of CPD, UNI provides itself with a unique opportunity to experiment with change on a limited basis before institutionalizing that change. Meanwhile, I am grateful to Dr. George for permitting us to share the following selections from his dissertation with the INNOVATOR readers. (For those who wish to peruse it further, a copy is on reserve in the University library.)

Emily C. Wadsworth, Coordinator, Program for  
Interdisciplinary Education and Co-Coordinator  
of the Kellogg Faculty Fellowship Program,  
Guest Editor



Innovation has been a part of the Northeastern tradition from the moment the institution was conceived by Benjamin Willis, Superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools.

"...Willis did not want an ordinary teacher-training institution. He hoped that both the curriculum and the campus which the college occupied would make a unique contribution to teacher education. With funds from the Educational Facilities Laboratory and the Ford Foundation, he called together a group of professional educators, 'people I had a lot of respect for,' to plan the new college."

The first Teachers College Conference was held at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago, December 26-28, 1957.

"Superintendent Willis began the conference by issuing a challenge to the committee to devise a program of education for teachers which might pave the way for one hundred more like it to be built in the next one hundred years.<sup>1</sup> The Superintendent enjoined the committee to be pioneering in what this program might be. They were not to be hampered by traditional requirements for teacher education of the State of Illinois or of any state board of education; nor were they to be concerned with the existing program of the Chicago Teachers College. None of the participants chosen were from Illinois.

We did not want to use the present Teachers College staff to draw up a bill of particulars. It is likely that they could come up with something similar to our present program. We want the most creative ideas as to the best program for teacher education.

The committee was to be pioneering in its recommendations. The program which the committee devised should allow a look into the window of the classroom of 1975 to glimpse the teacher identified as the school's most valuable teacher because of her experience as a student in our Teachers College.<sup>2</sup>"

The participants in the Second Teachers College Conference, held in January 1958, suggested that

"The future staff of the college should design a program different from the usual three-way approach with courses in the sciences, social sciences and humanities. Rather, the program should consist of three strands: a special type of general education, a program of professional education, and a major. Independent study and student participation in the classroom activity should be encouraged. Teachers should be educated to deal with problems in a systematic way; problems and interrelationships, continuity and history, and the methods of scholarship in various fields should be stressed rather than strings of facts and miscellaneous bits of knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

The teachers recruited for the new institution should, the committee believed, have many of the qualities of the distinguished first-rate liberal arts college faculty. However, this new faculty should recognize and foster in their students a recognition that no discipline of the mind is complete in itself; that each draws its significance...from the light it sheds on the whole world illuminated by learning.<sup>4</sup>

In general, the committee agreed with the recommendations of the first conference in the development of the curriculum. The student first should be introduced to the world of learning through some kind of broad synthesis of the



entire field into which he is being initiated. The next step would be more specific work in some major field. The major, however, is not to be considered a highly specialized work, but as a broad major in a general discipline. Near the end of the college program, the student should once again be provided with a synthetic view of all that he has done and accomplished during his four years of education. The committee members believed that this movement from synthesis to specialization to synthesis should help the student to understand the context in which the subject matter of the elementary school would be taught. The committee also assumed that there would be a gradual introduction of instructional methodology, followed by a heavy emphasis upon specific methods in the fourth summer immediately before the student entered into his internship year. Reaffirming the emphasis of the first committee, the participants in the second conference also agreed that this program should consume the full day.... It will not be possible for the student to be on a part-time basis, or to work outside afternoons....<sup>5</sup>

The dreams of Willis and the conferees began to take concrete form, and Roy Jervis was appointed Dean of the yet-to-be-organized-and-built Chicago Teachers College-North in 1960.

"We first met Dean Jervis when he visited Sabin in the fall of 1960, and spoke to the faculty. He was a tall, rather gangling, dark-haired man with a pleasant manner. The meeting was in the auditorium, and Jervis spoke for about an hour. He had a fervent, emotional, almost messianic way of talking, as he laid out his views on what the new college was to be. Like nearly everyone else present, I was bowled over. I found myself agreeing with just about everything he said. Essentially, he took a liberal arts-general education approach to teacher education. We would grant only the B.A. degree, not the B.Ed. He put a heavy emphasis on the social sciences, and indicated there would be a large number of required hours in that area. He also stressed the necessity of training in the humanities, and in foreign languages. He talked about linguistics, and mathematics. He also insisted that proper education in ecology was a requirement in our times, and was one of the earliest advocates, so far as I know, of that field of study. He came out strongly in favor of an interdisciplinary approach, said he didn't like the traditional departmental organization, and indicated that there would be a divisional structure in the new college. He also told us we would have at our disposal all the resources of technology that could be adapted to teacher education: television, a tele-prompter system for using audio-visual aids, advanced data-retrieval systems, even a special phone dialing system for dictating letters, memos, and scholarly papers. He also indicated that he intended to see that we got substantial salary increases. Together we were going to build the most innovative and greatest college in the whole country, maybe the world.<sup>6</sup>

During his year of preparation, Jervis was also busy sketching out the program and structure of the new institution. Built upon the recommendations of the two advisory conferences, the program was heavily oriented toward the liberal arts, and toward an integrated approach to the subject matter to be taught. Instead of the usual discipline-oriented instructional departments, Jervis adopted the recommendation of the first planning team that the college be organized in broad divisions.

Jervis set up five divisions with unusual names revealing something of their educational goals. The Division for the Study of Interpersonal Communication of Ideas..., the Division for the Study of Human Personality..., the Division for the Study of Society and Its Institutions..., the Division for the Study of Natural Science..., [and finally,] the Division for the Professional Education of Elementary School Teachers... In each of the divisions, Jervis had



sketched out a basic program for the new curriculum, usually beginning with an interdisciplinary approach to the subject matter with a common course that would set the stage for what was to come. Then, Jervis suggested, the student would take a more specialized course, still with a concentration upon where the subject matter fit into the total scheme of things.

A great many hopes were pegged on the new college. Shortly before it opened, the Chicago American prophesied that the new college would be the breakthrough which will relieve the teacher shortage in the city. The editorialist conjectured that by strengthening instruction in the different subject fields--mathematics, art, the social sciences--it will eventually raise the level of education for all Chicago's public schools.<sup>7</sup>

The faculty too was hopeful. Despite their disagreements with the dean [which had begun to develop soon after his debut], they hoped for better things to come. Both administration and faculty shared a general sense of excitement. 'I was very excited,' said one faculty member,

and I don't think it was just the program that was exciting. I was excited about the idea of the commuter college.... I was very excited about the idea of a liberal arts training for the elementary school teachers; I would not have gone to an ordinary teachers' college. I had a very strong prejudice against teachers' colleges.<sup>8</sup>

Another faculty member recalled the same euphoria.

It was exciting; there was a real atmosphere of looking toward the future. Gee, this place is a really exciting place to be! It was experimental, in terms of--we're not going to be afraid to try new things; the whole college was a college of education, but it had a liberal arts orientation, and the enthusiasm came right from the top on down.<sup>9</sup>

Chicago Teachers College-North opened its doors to students in September 1961. It was officially dedicated on May 24, 1962, and shortly thereafter Dean Jervis announced his resignation, to become effective July 1, 1962.

Jerome Sachs, Assistant Dean of the College under Jervis, was appointed Dean and officially began his duties on September 12, 1962.

"Under Sachs flexibility and improvisation were encouraged. While his goal definitely was to continue the innovative thrust of the early Jervis administration, his method was to encourage new efforts without censuring those who felt uncomfortable with them. He was also willing to allow innovation to express itself in many different ways rather than to force such activity into the narrow confines of an approved ideology. After several years as leader of the institution, Sachs defined six guiding principles which had helped him in shaping the college:

1. It is neither necessary nor desirable that the entire institution be experimental, innovative or non-traditional if you prefer those words. The grand-scale experiment often leads to rapid institutionalization of new ideas which become old very fast. Flexibility is soon lost and the patient suffers from hardening of the academic arteries.



2. It is essential to establish a climate in which those who would be freewheeling, faculty and students, feel free to do so. This requires support and fiscal wire-walking so that neither experimenter nor traditionalist can rightfully claim the other is funded at his expense.
3. Never have a single experiment with a larger institution. To do so is to provide a large, slow target for all not in the experiment. Provide a series of targets, preferably some fast moving, to avoid concentration of firepower on a single one.
4. Allow for, and encourage, the movement into and out of such programs on the part of faculty and students. This can bring about a much wider base of support and tends to inhibit the growth of permanent in-groups and permanent out-groups. It gives the timid an opportunity to taste without long commitment and can prevent charges of elitism.
5. Never innovate or experiment except in response to an expressed need. Initiation by administration should be avoided if possible.
6. In speaking and writing, take great care to describe the climate so that those who prefer traditional programs, generally a majority of both students and faculty, do not feel that they are second-rate citizens. This means dollar support and careful attention to building and rebuilding and improving the so-called traditional programs. It means showing pride in and concern for all students and faculty. If the majority group comes to feel, correctly or not, that its major value to the college lies in providing control groups for experiments, the experiments will generate vigorous opposition.<sup>10</sup>

Improvisation was not restricted to curricular and organizational matters in the first five years of the college. The college experimented with a wide range of activities during the early years."

The college offered summer teacher institutes in linguistics, human relations and nuclear science.

"With Willis's aid, an internship program was established under the joint sponsorship of Dean Sachs and Dr. Lewis B. Mayhew, Professor in the Graduate School of Education at Stanford. Each year between 1963 and 1966, a doctoral candidate from Stanford, working under a Kellogg Foundation Junior College Leadership Program, spent a year on the North-side campus. The intern worked in various administrative departments of the college and at the same time conducted a research project in connection with his doctoral study.

Sachs also maintained contact with other experimental academic institutions throughout the country. In February of 1964, Dean Sachs with leaders of eleven other colleges throughout the nation joined in what was at first called the John Dewey Institution Compact. Later in the same month, the organization was renamed the Union for Research and Experimentation in Higher Education (UREHE). The three-year agreement among the twelve colleges stated that their combined function would be:

1. to conduct experiments and research projects involving two or more member colleges;



2. to foster competent research in education by individuals within member colleges, that is, advising and contributing to the development of favorable conditions for teachers interested in educational experiments and research, and in creating an atmosphere more confidently self-critical and open to changes in the conduct of education; this may point toward the establishment of a national society of individuals, with open membership, calling itself something like the Society of Experimental Academicians; and
3. to give visibility to results achieved both by its coordinated research projects (a) and by the projects of individual faculty members (b).<sup>12</sup>

In explaining membership in the new organization to the college community, Sachs indicated that it was something about which to be proud.

It says something for this college that we can all be proud of. It says that such famous and long-established colleges as Reed, Goddard, Antioch, Bennington...all of them think that we have something which they will find valuable. And we do; we definitely do.<sup>13</sup>

During the years 1961-1965, the college was growing and changing in all areas.

"The first efforts at finding new organizational solutions as the college grew and changed was occasioned by the demands of a new experimental program. The experiment, which became the Center for Inner City Studies, set two precedents. It was an activity about which only a few faculty members shared great enthusiasm. Consequently, it lacked college-wide commitment. Dean Sachs realized that if he placed the new program administratively within any existing division or department, it was likely not to survive because those entities were busy building courses and majors to support their own developing academic programs. As a result, Sachs determined to keep the new Center administratively separate from other college activities. In that way, Sachs could see that the Center personnel got the support and encouragement which they needed to establish the new program, and he could protect it budgetarily from fiscal raids by the traditional departments which were growing rapidly and which also had expanding budget needs.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the Center's beginning set the precedent of administrative independence for experimental programs.

This administrative separation was strengthened by the results of the deliberations of the Curriculum Council. Some members of the Council were concerned about providing permanent approval for the ambitious new program since its permanence could not be guaranteed. Because the program was federally funded, it was likely to be terminated whenever federal funding ceased. What were the college's moral obligations likely to be, some members of the Council asked, if the program were formally approved? Could approval be withdrawn when funding was no longer available? Other members of the Curriculum Council resented being coerced into approving the program. Due to deadlines associated with the federal grant requirements, members felt they had little choice whether to approve the courses and degree requirements advanced for the Center program. The deadlines provided too little time in which to consider the issues carefully, they complained. Faculty with both views were satisfied by a compromise which established a 'steering committee for new programs' as a subcommittee of the Curriculum Council which could approve the Center program as an 'experimental and temporary' addition to the college curriculum. The implicit



agreement was that those experimental and temporary programs which flourished would eventually be moved into the appropriate permanent college structure after review by normal review agencies, and those which failed would simply be allowed to fade away.<sup>15</sup>

Thus the college set a second precedent, thereby resisting the temptation of treating experiments as permanent programs from their inception. Consequently, a pattern was established which was to be used later in the development of other experimental programs. New programs would be administered separately from the traditional college programs. In this way they would be protected from direct competition with the demands of the traditional programs and departments. Eventually the Steering Committee for New Programs, which had been, at first, a subcommittee of the Curriculum Council, became an independent body made up of faculty members who had some enthusiasm and concern for experimentation. Under this organizational arrangement, the Center for Inner City Studies was successfully launched and eventually became a permanent part of the University.

Although the Steering Committee for New Programs had been adopted as an expedient measure to skirt the usual but time-consuming program approval on campus, so that the college could conform to the tight schedule of deadlines for a federal grant, it worked so well that the college had established a regular Committee on New Programs which handled the screening of proposals for innovation and experimentation on campus.<sup>16</sup> This small committee was charged with assessing a proposed program and evaluating the program after an appropriate time to determine whether the project should continue. If the Committee on New Programs gave a favorable recommendation, the program was reviewed by the Curriculum Council or some other campus agency for permanent inclusion in the college program. In the early years the New Programs Committee was especially careful to guard against the effort which might be made to use it for a speedy approval of a traditional major which was new to our developing campus.<sup>17</sup>

Early in 1966, Dean Sachs, feeling the necessity for a permanent agency to handle experimentation with adequate authority to compete with other campus bodies, recommended that the Senate approve a new Division of New Programs to supplement the five existing college divisions.<sup>18</sup> Such a division was necessary, the Dean said, if the college were to continue its efforts toward innovation. The faculty's intense concentration upon the task of building a multi-purpose institution with the coming of state control meant a concurrent relaxation in its efforts toward educational innovation. A North Central team which visited the campus in January of 1966 found that

...the faculty largely assumes that the transition to state control spells the end of the experiment and there seems to be a widespread view that diversification also means revision to more traditional curricular patterns.<sup>19</sup>

Although no new division was created immediately, the idea was supported by the writing of the McKelvey Report in February 1966, and a Center for Program Development with a director reporting directly to the President of the college was included in the organizational plan approved by the faculty senate in August 1967.

The first step in the direction of the new office came in 1969, when the Office of New Program Development was formally established and approved by the Board of Governors and the Board of Higher Education.<sup>20</sup> A committee of ten representative faculty members served as an advisory body, at first to a part-time director, and after September 1970, to a full-time director, to aid in the



determination of policy and to provide objectivity in the evaluation and approval of all new, experimental programs. The office's charge was to manage approved experimental programs, evaluate them, usually after a two-year laboratory period, and encourage the genesis of other new programs. According to the first director, 'the Center, then, is both a clearinghouse and incubator for educational experimentation at Northeastern.'<sup>21</sup> When the first full-time director was hired in September 1970, the official name of the office was changed to the Center for Program Development (CPD).

With the establishment of the CPD and the hiring of a full-time director, the college was assured that there would be an effective advocate for nontraditional programming to strengthen continued experimentation within the college. Perhaps just as important, the office provided a mechanism for funding experimental projects. As Sachs indicated in a review of experimental programs at the college,

...sometimes requests for funds had to be carefully weighted for priorities. Financial support could not be obtained at the expense of established programs. The Office of Program Development is now an official part of the college structure and reasonable budget support for further experimentation can be expected.<sup>22</sup>

Like UNI's Center for Inner City Studies, which was the efficient cause of its founding, CPD has become an ongoing part of what is now not a teachers college of 1,350 but a multi-purpose urban university of nearly 10,350. Fortunately, CPD is not the only source of innovation and change on campus today, although by having a number of alternative programs, it may be the most visible. The ghosts of the Jervis era may at last be laid so that the institution as a whole may now be able to recognize its roots and get back to its original business of being the very best of its kind. CPD's role in this mission is to be a catalyst for change, not a ghetto for alternative programs. The future, in this regard at least, looks promising.

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#### Endnotes

1. Benjamin C. Willis, Remarks to the Teachers College Conference, Chicago, Illinois, 26-28 December 1957, Northeastern Illinois University Library Archives.

2. Ibid.

3. "Summary Statement--Second Conference on Planning a Program for a Teachers College," Chicago, Illinois, 24-25 March 1958 (mimeographed), p. 5.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid, p. 9.

6. Frederick, "Memoir," pp. 37-38. Others present, including Moran and Goldberg, expressed similar reactions to the first meeting.

7. Editorial, Chicago American, 10 August 1961, clipping in Municipal Reference Library, Chicago Teachers College folder.

8. Interview with Howenstine.

9. Interview with Malek.



10. Jerome M. Sachs, "Case Study--Northeastern Illinois State College: Coexistence of Tradition and Change" (photocopy), January 1970, p. 3, Library Archives, pp. 27-28.

11. The original twelve members of UREHE included Chicago Teachers College-North, Bard, Antioch, Bennington, Goddard, Monteith College of Wayne State, New College of Hofstra University, Reed, Sarah Lawrence, Stephens, and Nasson College.

12. "CTC-N., Eleven Others Form College Compact," Interim, 5 February 1964, p. 1.

13. Jerome Sachs quoted in "Proud Moment," Interim, 5 February 1964, p. 5.

14. Sachs, "Tradition and Change," n.p.

15. Interview with E. Frederick.

16. Sachs, "Case Study," p. 20.

17. Ibid.

18. Illinois Teachers College, Chicago-North, Minutes of Faculty Senate, Meeting of 24 February 1966, Library Archives.

19. North Central, "Report of a Visit," 1966, p. 12.

20. Northeastern Illinois State College, Undergraduate Catalog 1970-1971 (Chicago: Northeastern Illinois State College, 1970), p. 9.

21. William P. Moore to Members, Administrative Council, 5 April 1971, Library Archives.

22. Sachs, "Case Study," pp. 21-22.

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Reports of the 1979-80 Kellogg Faculty Fellows