

University Of Arizona Issues

Finding a new President for the University of Arizona is not the problem of the moment facing the University. The actual issue is how to generate a broad consensus of what the nature of the University should be in the coming years. This fundamental question should be explored by a representative committee of faculty members, department heads and deans, the Board of Regents, and community leaders.

The primary purpose of the University of Arizona is to serve the educational and social needs of the people of our State. This is done by: (1) providing an excellent level of education to students who attend the University; (2) generating new knowledge through teaching and research programs; (3) sharing its accumulated wisdom with the public through public service programs, all in the tradition of a Land Grant College.

Arizona suffers from the fact that the State never developed a Master Plan for higher education. The lack of State Colleges, akin to those in virtually every state, has forced our university system to expand beyond reason. To provide a basic college education to thousands of undergraduates, educating and challenging others who want to pursue graduate studies and professional careers, and engaging the faculty and graduate students in research programs in fields ranging from astronomy, optical Sciences, medicine, the fine arts, social sciences and humanities, issues of space, adequate funding, institutional management, leadership, etc., become overwhelming. Academic managers, whose interests, experience, and training are often inadequate to deal with challenges they face, are under stress, constantly criticized, and unable to cope with a spectrum of problems.

Creating a four-year, high quality, State College in Tucson (as well as others around the State), would provide a sensible alternative for students whose primary aim is to earn a Bachelor's degree. Transfer opportunities between community colleges, the state college (s), and the University would be available when appropriate. The University would then be able to freeze its enrollment at an agreed upon and manageable level.

The Global Campus remains a questionable enterprise undertaken by the University Administration and Regents, with no perceptible input from the faculty. Despite often contentious interactions between the faculty, administration, and Regents, the basic truth is that the University's faculty is its most crucial component. It is their collective reputation that determines the University's standing, worldwide. Faculty must be involved in all substantive academic decisions, including the choice of academic leadership – their advice may need to be challenged, but to be overlooked or dismissed out of hand is a serious error.

Regents are often appointed as an acknowledgement of successful business careers, political connections etc. Although most have experienced various levels of higher education, few, in my experience, understand colleges and universities should not and cannot be managed exactly like a business enterprise. Programs in the Humanities, from a student's perspective, might be more valuable than those in Physics or Chemistry, but the

costs to the University for funding the departments and their faculties will differ enormously. Some disciplines attract generous external funding from Foundations or Federal programs while others rarely are on the receiving end of a gift – yet to a student, both are equally important. Liberal and Conservative political issues frequently come to the fore; both must be tolerated and encouraged within acceptable limits – defining those limits usually is stressful.

Having served as President of the University of Arizona, a Trustee of a private University, an Arizona private school board member, and a director on the boards of several companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange, I know how different each of these organizations are and how vital it is to receive appropriate orientation before you can contribute effectively to the enterprise. We need to do a better job of educating and orienting our leaders.

So, what to do? The first “Law of Holes” when you are in one, is to stop digging. First, clearly define the issues then follow “the Principle of Critical Importance.” Among the issues are:

1. Before any actions are taken, we need to define and reach agreement the problem the University is trying to solve and achieve a broad consensus on the goals.
2. The University will be seeking a new President. This step should follow, not precede step 1.
3. The Global Campus issue remains divisive and must be resolved now, with details of prior negotiations made fully public. If deemed to have negative implications for the reputation and well-being of the University, divestiture must be pursued.
4. The recruiting of a Provost should be halted until a new President is appointed. (You do not hire the vice-President of a company before you hire the President!)
5. Serious planning of the need to limit enrollment should be initiated with a parallel study of its financial implications.
6. Interim leadership is needed to work through management issues in the months ahead.
7. The role of intercollegiate athletics needs to be reviewed. When NIL payments exceed the salaries of professors, something is clearly amiss.

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