

Baylor University Faculty Senate Newsletter

October 1998

Comments from Senate Chair Daniel B. McGee:

The Academic Community

Humans have always gathered themselves together into communities to meet common needs and accomplish shared tasks. These human collectives are characterized by who comprises the community, what its purpose is and how it is organized.

In the 13th century a kind of community called a "university" emerged in the Western world. The charter of that first university, the University of Paris, defined itself as a "fellowship of teachers and students." Through the centuries the composition of the university has become richer as other necessary groups have become constituent parts but its initial identity was defined by that relationship between teacher and student.

As suggested by the title "university," the purpose of this institution was grand. Its task, roughly defined, was to preserve, communicate, and advance cultural knowledge and wisdom of every kind. Again, through the years, there has been an expansion of the ways in which these functions are performed. However, the ideal that the university exists to serve the society of which it is a part has remained constant.

The organization of the university, i.e. the distribution of power and responsibility, and the texture of the relationships among the various constituent groups, is the major object of my reflections in this commentary.

Historically and currently there are many communal configurations within the world's universities. These communal shapes are the result of many factors, including the competing ideas of the university in the history of this institution, and the communal models that exist within the university's society.

In American society, universities have been influenced by our democratic political ideals. Here the ideals of universal suffrage, balance of power, value of diversity, and protection of minorities have been influential. The unevenness with which these ideals have been achieved is evident in both our political institutions and our universities. It is sobering to reflect on the parallel struggles of ethnic minorities and women to participate fully in both our political process and in our universities. I think that it is fair to say that in this story the universities, for the most part, have followed and not led in the implementation of democratic ideals in community structure. Recognition should be given to how the perspectives of those formerly excluded now enrich our academic community. Also we need to look about and see those who still are excluded or under-served by academia.

A second community in our society that is often pointed to as a model that should be copied within university life is the family. The call to be like a family promotes nurturing and personal relationships. The wide range of interests that family members have for each other is appealing. The tradition of *in loco parentis* has a significant place in the history of American higher education.

Increasingly, we are recognizing the down side of modeling ourselves after the family. To begin with, the natural assumption is that a family is a homogenous community in which those who are different are excluded. The kind of openness that creates the diversity needed for a university is squelched by the family image of kinship.

Another problem with the family model for a university is that in families someone has to play the role of child. Children by definition are immature and in need of discipline and direction. Students are the first candidates for this role. While it may be that many students are in the final stage of maturation into full citizenship responsibility, we probably better promote that final maturation by holding them responsible than by treating them as children. Of course, students are not the only ones who can become viewed and treated as children. Sometimes a multi-tiered faculty system is established by both formal and informal rules and expectations. In such a system some faculty are expected to be seen but not heard. They are denied tenure, the badge of faculty adulthood which says you are trusted and worth hearing. It is possible also for staff and/or the faculty as a whole to be told by the structure and rules of the university that their views are not trusted or valued. It is ironic that the family model can undermine the defining image of that 13th century definition of the university as "the fellowship of teachers and students" by reducing either or both groups to minor players.

Let's think hard about who we are as university and how we best structure our community to perform the academic task. Then, we can accept the full responsibility that is commensurate with our place and role in the community of learning.

Comments from President Robert B. Sloan, Jr.:

In February of this year the Board of Directors of Brazos Valley Public Broadcasting Foundation, which operates Waco PBS affiliate KCTF, approached Baylor about expanding the University's involvement with the public television station. For the past five years Baylor has provided in-kind support for KCTF in the form of office and studio space, accounting services and other infrastructure assistance. The directors of Brazos Valley and KCTF's management recognized, however, that the station's long-term viability and success depended on finding a partner that could help the station grow. After merger discussions with KERA-TV in Dallas and KLRU-TV in Austin failed to yield a partnership, KCTF turned to Baylor.

Dr. Stan Madden, vice president for university relations, and Larry Brumley, associate vice president for communications, spent six months studying the options that Baylor had relative to its future relationship with KCTF. They held numerous conversations with KCTF General Manager Kliff Kuehl, Telecommunication Division director Michael

Korpi, PBS and Corporation for Public Broadcasting representatives and officials from other university-affiliated public television stations, examined reams of documents, and conducted site visits to two church-related institutions that operate PBS stations. Through this investigation we determined that it made sense for Baylor to accept an offer from Brazos Valley to transfer KCTF's license to the University. Baylor will not be compensating Brazos Valley in any way for this license. The foundation is giving the station to the University.

We believe that an upcoming increase in funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, coupled with additional operating efficiencies (such as merging the Public Relations Office's video communications operation with the television station), enhanced fund-raising support, growth in revenue from outside production work, and other benefits of University affiliation, will allow the station to be self supporting.

There are a number of reasons why we believe this is a positive move for Baylor. First and foremost, this arrangement secures a laboratory environment for students in the University's telecommunication program. Since KCTF moved into our facilities in 1993, our students have been given opportunities to apply what they learn in the classroom to a real, live television station without having to leave the campus. I believe this kind of learning environment contributes to the outstanding reputation our telecommunication graduates enjoy in the broadcast industry. If KCTF had gone off the air or had merged with an out-of-town station, we would have lost that valuable learning tool for our students.

Another reason for assuming KCTF's license is that the station serves a community need. While PBS programming is also available on cable from KERA, the Dallas station does not produce local programs that focus on Waco issues and concerns. Within the past few months KCTF has conducted a number of community outreach initiatives such as sweater drives, town hall meetings and teleconferences, and has produced programs for organizations such as the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, the Junior League, Carver Academy and the Community Youth Summit.

I also believe there is public relations value in our association with a respected organization like PBS, which earns more recognition than any other television service for its high-quality children's, cultural, documentary, science and public affairs programming. PBS's non-commercial, public-service mission guarantees that substance and value, not commercial interests, drive programming decisions. It is a logical fit with Baylor's educational mission. There is also reason to believe that as a PBS affiliate the University will have the opportunity to produce programming using Baylor talent and resources that can be distributed to other stations throughout the country, thereby generating additional visibility for the institution.

Finally, a future benefit to the University is represented in the advent of digital television. Current FCC regulations mandate that all non-commercial television stations in the country begin broadcasting a digital signal by the year 2003. This new technology means that KCTF will have the capability of broadcasting not only television programming, but

data as well, over as many as four channels. While the space allotted here doesn't allow for a thorough explanation of the technical details, suffice it to say that the digital technology has tremendous implications for educational institutions such as Baylor.

You will be hearing more about the KCTF acquisition in the next couple of weeks. But I wanted to provide you with an advance look at what we believe is a most exciting opportunity for Baylor University.

Dates of Senate meetings for 1998-99:

Meetings begin promptly at 3:30 p.m. in room 303; Cashion Academic Center, Hankamer School of Business.

October 20, 1998	February 16, 1999
November 17, 1998	March 16, 1999
December 15, 1998	April 20, 1999
January 19, 1999	May 11, 1999

Important Dates:

President's Faculty Forum: Thursday, February 4, 1999; 3:30 pm; Bennett Auditorium

President's State of the University Address: Wednesday, April 21, 1999; 3:30 pm; Barfield Drawing Room, BDSC

Information about the Faculty Senate:

All academic areas of Baylor schools have elected members on the Senate. Thirty-two members serve staggered, three-year terms. No more than two faculty members may serve from a single department. Members may serve two consecutive three-year terms, after which they cannot be re-elected for one year.

You are encouraged to contact any senator and share your views. We represent you, but cannot present your views on important matters unless you communicate with us. Please let us hear from you through personal contact, telephone, email, or campus mail.

John Thorburn, Classics, has been extremely helpful in updating the Faculty Senate website. You can access it at the following new address:
<http://www3.baylor.edu/~Fac_Senate/senatehome.html>.

The Faculty Senate would like to thank John for his contribution.

A special thank you is extended to **Leigh Ann Marshall**, ITC, for the work she has done in formatting this newsletter.

[Home](#)