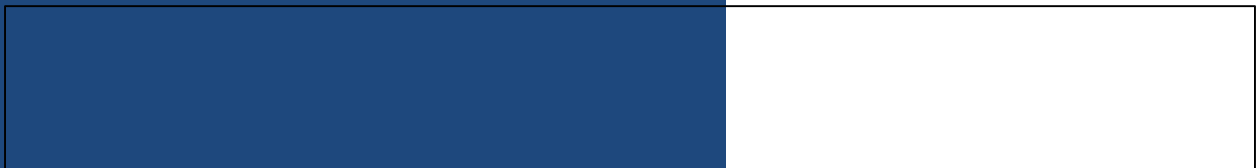


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The Founding and Defining of a University

PREFACE

Southern Methodist University (SMU) was founded for a distinct purpose, to serve as the “connectional institution” for the Methodist Church west of the Mississippi when Vanderbilt University gave up its Church connection and that function.

Fortunately for the new university, the Church was in the strong

the founding of the University. He reminds us that such ventures are not possible without vision and persistence.

In a sense he sacrificed himself to his vision and to the task, for he interrupted his research career and was later relieved of his presidential duties, in a twist of dramatic irony, in favor of Hiram Abiff Boaz, who had tried to sell the new university to Ft.

who told Hyer around 1905, “Dallas is the best unoccupied territory in the south. Some day someone will build a university in Dallas and you Methodists are the ones who should do it.” Buttrick was executive secretary of the General Education Board of New York, organized by John D. Rockefeller to aid higher education.

As Thomas writes, “Hyer and Southern Methodist University did not fit into the same category as Chicago or Stanford. Instead of one enormously wealthy benefactor, SMU had to rely on the Methodists of Texas and the citizens of Dallas who contributed money in relatively small amounts. Nevertheless, President Hyer designed a campus and buildings on a grand scale that would cost the kind of money Chicago and Stanford had.” She goes on to say that, even though the ambitious plan

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a politician; the president of a private institution must be a financier;
the president of a denominational university must be both. Since I am

and defining difficult propositions clearly and simply—that a university must pursue truth and hold freedom of inquiry as a

Willis was 43 when he became president, more than six feet tall, handsome, athletic, in fighting trim. He looked like the All-Southwest Conference football tackle that he had been, playing on SMU's championship team in 1931 for Coach Ray Morrison, whom he revered. He had been executive assistant to Paul Quillian, minister of First Methodist Church in Houston, and was an able administrator. He had been licensed to preach, and he brought his YMCA and Methodist Church values when he came back to his Alma Mater as assistant dean of students in 1945. He was steeped in the tradition of Methodism, including service and social concern, and in his heart was the Wesley maxim, "Let us unite those two so long divided, truth and vital piety."

He soon took on the role of backing up President Umphrey Lee, who had seen SMU through the war, whose health was failing and who did not like to make unpleasant decisions.

It is startling to recall that when Tate took office in 1954 SMU's annual budget was four and a half million, its endowment six and a half million, its enrollment 8000 students, 3000 of them in Dallas College, the downtown adult education branch. Tuition was \$500 a year. (When he left office the budget was \$30 million, endowment was \$40 million, and there was a substantially greater number of regular undergraduates and graduate students, though the enrollment, by choice, had grown by little more than a thousand students. In the early years before, and then during, the Master Plan, we looked toward an endowment of \$50 million as the Promised Land.)

As well as deaning and becoming SMU's first vice president for public relations, development, administration, and everything else the provost and financial v.p. did not do, Willis taught a popular Sociology course called "Marriage and the Family." He had B.A. and M.A. degrees from SMU in that discipline.

He had undertaken doctoral studies at the University of Texas at Austin, but did not have the Ph.D. He felt some insecurity about this; but as he grew in office and it became clear how deeply he respected the faculty and how he defended them always for expressing their ideas as long as they were in their academic fields, it came to bother

time to remind these business leaders of the true nature of a university in terms they could understand.”

He said to them, “One of the most difficult tasks I have as president is to interpret the nature of a university. First, let me mention a few things a university is . . . It was not, he said, a football schedule—not a school for juveniles—not a college. “The object of a college is to teach, but the object of a university is both to teach and to seek out the truth in every form. This is the process we call research. A university’s stock in trade is not only students but also ideas, for new ideas are the most important things in the world. All progress has come from shocking ideas.”

He went on to say, and this is pure Willis Tate: “Every university realizes there are risks involved in this freedom. One is the crackpot who takes advantage of this freedom . . . and another is the exploitation by some of this free discussion for their own benefit or protection. We think it is worth the risks involved. To be sure of our democracy we must create and maintain a great university here and keep it clothed in the atmosphere of freedom. This is our contribution to America and to mankind and in the service of a creative God. With His help, we are determined to do it well.”

A decade later he was still at it, framing this truth in what he considered the necessary metaphor. Speaking downtown again, as he often did, he declared, “A university is a marketplace of ideas. It is a marketplace for the free enterprise of ideas. Every person in this room, I hope, believes in free enterprise. This concept of freedom in the market means that every product and service must stand in competition with every other. This freedom is essentially the same freedom as academic freedom dealing in the realm of ideas.” He made clear, again, that this is a “risk-taking” freedom and must not be abused by academics speaking outside their field of competence.

Professors at SMU at the time, such as historian Paul F. Boller, Jr., have testified to Willis’ quiet strength in defending their obligation to research, write, and speak freely in their fields. Often they did not know at the time that he had deflected criticism from them.

The racial integration of the University was also a challenge for Tate in the late Fifties and the Sixties. SMU led the way among universities in Texas and the South in integration, though it was

historian Albert C. Outler, who had the idea of a “University College” as home for general education and who authored for the Master Plan the elegant essay “The Idea of the University and the Idea of SMU as A University.” The members of this Faculty Committee went on to become university leaders, James Brooks, Aaron Sartain, Charles Galvin as deans, and Brooks as long-time provost, and Laurence Perrine and William Tittle as department chairs.

The question posed in Outler’s essay was, “Can a Church-Related university like SMU become a great private university?” The answer was a resounding yes, SMU could—because of the nature of the Wesleyan tradition of higher education and devotion to that principle of “Think and Let Think.” President Hyer had, as noted, stated firmly at the beginning that SMU was to be denominational but not sectarian, a university open to various ideas had,3 (SMU) -34.5 43.6 (Brooks,)--346 (.) -61.6 (Bu10.5 0 0

We had high ideas and ideals. We had John Henry Newman in hand. We had a good prairie college and we were creating a university. We were, in a sense, amateurs but we took as inspiration, just as Hyer had, the leading American private universities.

The salient features of the Plan were indeed those of any American private university which might aim high: selective admissions, the cherishing of each individual student inside and outside the course structure, academic freedom as a and a balance between the humanities, social sciences, and sciences and between teaching and research.

We debated the academic weakness of the business and engineering schools, deciding to keep and strengthen them. What to do with the small music school was debated, and I remember Johnnie Marie springing to the blackboard and drawing a box parallel to the other schools and saying, "There it is, put it there," and so we did, creating the School of the Arts, which has turned out all right.

It was a grand year, and put some wind back in Willis' sails halfway through his term as president, and led to some things good and bad. The Board of Trustees was reorganized from its unworkable

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University's talents and facilities by the community, and in other ways whenever these are consistent with the objectives and role of the University and the legitimate needs of society.

UPS AND DOWNS: A PARTIAL ASSESSMENT

Has SMU been true to its stated goals and objectives? (I realize that I may be presumptuous in "grading" the University, but I care deeply about these issues and, like Thucydides, I had a bias and was there.) Here is a sampling of our ups and downs.

*Freedom of Inquiry and Expression

in a dynamic city and has variously tried to help meet the city' s educational and cultural needs and aspirations. The Master Plan kept the then-weak schools of Business and Engineering. Later efforts were made by the administration to curtail and then eliminate Education. President Pye's model for a strong private university did not include

Tate came back in as president for the interim. Hardin had reported an athletic violation to the NCAA and many thought that this was the cause of the Board's action. Others thought that Hardin had been acting too independently of the Board, especially of the Board of Governors where the power was. The Church (Paul Hardin's father was a Methodist bishop) also criticized the Board. It was a time of bitter and unfortunate disharmony in SMU and a symptom of a major flaw in governance.

*Governance

In the later 70s other strains appeared, for example, the firing by Board fiat of an eccentric young professor in the Business school. The Board of Governors was at least close to direct intervention in the academic process. This was at the root of the troubles that came in the 80s. The football scandal and the way it was handled by Trustee leadership was a consequence of close-bound power held by a few members of the Board of Governors created by the Master Plan in 1963.

*Football Scandal, 1986

The direct paying of football players resulting in the so-called Death Penalty involved some Trustees as well as alumni and other boosters. Some of them were prominent people, all shielded from public disgrace by then Governor Bill Clements, who had no part in setting up the scheme. It was unbelievable to the faculty and a dark day for SMU and showed again that big-time football was the antagonist to our academic purpose and goals. The recovery, which involved the restructuring of the Board of Trustees and elimination of the Board of Governors, followed by the tough leadership of A. Kenneth Pye, was nationally recognized as remarkable and greatly to the University's credit.

*The Bush Library

I was going to say that there had been disappointingly little discussion or debate over the prospect of the Bush Library coming to SMU. That changed from last November to the present, with much discussion and debate, mostly over the proposed Bush Institute (or "Belief Tank") under the control

The leaders of Southern Methodist University believe that a university does not fully discharge its responsibility to its students and to the community at large if it hands out knowledge (and the power which that knowledge eventually yields) without posing questions about its responsible uses. Through the Cary M. Maguire Center for Ethics and Public Responsibility, SMU strives to foster the moral education and public responsibilities of those whom it empowers by:

- ' Supporting faculty research, teaching, and writing in ethics that cross disciplinary, professional, racial/cultural, and gender lines;
- ' Strengthening the ethics component in SMU's undergraduate and professional curriculum;
- ' Awarding grants to SMU students who wish to study issues in ethics or engage in community service.

SMU also believes that a university and the professions cannot ignore the urban habitat they helped to create and on which they depend. Thus, while not an advocacy group, the Maguire Center seeks to be integrally a part of the Metroplex, attending to the moral quandaries and controversies that beset our common life. To that end, the Center:

- ' Has created an Ethics Center Advisory Board of professional and community leaders;
- ' Organizes local seminars, colloquia, and workshopr Orand ge31he

