History Revisited

Four Mirrors on The Foundations of Accreditation in the Middle States Region

Life Begins at Forty:
A Brief History of the Commission
by Ewald B. Nyquist

The Middle States Association at Age One Hundred
The Last Twenty-five Years:
Issues and Challenges, 1887-1987
by Richard D. Challener

The Princeton Conference and the Birth of the Self-Study Process

The Ten Theses of F. Taylor Jones

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Associate Director for Communication
November 2008

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The Princeton Conference and the Birth of the Self-Study Process:
"Background and Purpose," Remarks by Ewald B. Nyquist, extracted from the Minutes of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools

"Analysis of Discussion at the Conference on Middle States Evaluation Policies and Procedures, June 20-21, 1957," extracted from the Minutes of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools

The Ten Theses of F. Taylor Jones
Extracted from the Minutes of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools

Editor's Note:

Minimal punctuation changes have been introduced into the originals to reflect contemporary practice, to the extent that they enhance readability and comprehension, using *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

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Life Begins at Forty:
A Brief History of the Commission

Ewald B. Nyquist

Deputy Commissioner of Education
The University of the State of New York
1961

Foreword

This history was undertaken at the request of a committee, composed of Charles C. Tillinghast, Karl G. Miller, Robert C. Clothier, and Gene Gisburne, designated by Father McGinley, President of the Association, to develop a suitable brochure on the history of the Association in commemoration of its 75th anniversary.

Not uncharacteristically, I disregarded the instructions about length which Tilly gave me when I reluctantly accepted the assignment. I did not have time, in the first place, to write a short history. Secondly, I wrote what I thought would be interesting to some and what I had an affection for. It was a lot.

As anticipated, the manuscript I submitted to the committee was too long and had to be edited to half its original length. Karl Miller, the flatterer, suggested that I duplicate the original manuscript and distribute copies to those who might have either the time or the inclination to read it. Temptation is what a man crawls away from hoping it will overtake him. I succumbed to Karl's suggestion.

As is the case with modem research in sociology, I do not know whether what I have included is important; I do know it is true. It is based on close scrutiny of all minutes since 1919 and all proceedings since 1917 - plus memory, of course. I hope the affection with which this history was written shows through the dull parade of facts and the amiable irreverence. It is dedicated to all those who have made the Commission the best group I ever knew.

—Ewald B. Nyquist
Honorary '60

"In the beginning, there was light and Adam. "

This opening assertion is intended to convey several notions:

1. Commission, as it is affectionately called by those who are intimately allied or acquainted with its work, began its life in a favorable climate of deep insights into the educational process and the purpose of accrediting;

2. These insights were the product of gifted men;

3. But, to reverse what Voltaire suggested, it is with men as it is with books, a very small number play a very great part;

4. Adam Leroy Jones and his initial group of colleagues established the precedent, carried down to the present, that the work of the Commission depends heavily on the personal leadership of its Chairman and a small, devoted group of colleagues; and

5. The Commission has, from the beginning, approached its task with a lightness of touch, a judicious levity, an amiable irreverence for pomposity and superficial but cherished academic practice and belief. Not unrelated is the Commission's historical attitude of hospitality towards experimentation. The accrediting process can be a grim ritual. A sense of humor, as Mark Van Doren has said, is the sign that a body "wants all the truth, and sees more sides of it than can be soberly and systematically stated."

A brief summary of the historical development of accrediting is in order. In the two decades preceding the establishing of the Commission, note had been taken by several agencies and institutions of the chaotic condition of admissions standards, transferability of credits, and graduation requirements in a pluralistic system of higher education and of the shocking nature of professional education, notably medicine. The Bureau of Education (now the United States Office) in carrying out its statistical and reportorial functions, had noted that despite "innumerable efforts to give a definition of a college, the word still remains almost as hard to define as 'gentleman'." It had recently been frustrated and estopped, by no less a source than the President of the United States, from issuing a national accredited list.

Similarly, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, finding it necessary to determine the eligibility of institutions to participate in its college faculty retirement program, established certain criteria defining a higher institution. The memorable Flexner report on medical education had recently resulted in the establishment of standards for medical schools with the dramatic result that large numbers promptly ceased to operate.

The North Central Association and the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, in the preceding five years, had embraced the accrediting function and had issued lists of accredited colleges. The Association of American Universities, concerned with establishing a list of institutions whose graduates would be eligible for admission to the then popular German universities, had been in accrediting work for three years. Finally, Adam Leroy Jones, being from New York, was well aware of the historical accrediting function (born 1784) of the New York State Education Department, both in this country and abroad.

As an early member of the Commission, George F. Zook, put it, "Fear of government in educational affairs and yet a realization that there must be some means of educational control and guidance produced the accrediting agency."

This is prologue. Its significance was undoubtedly recognized by Adam Leroy Jones, Professor of Philosophy and Director of University Admissions at Columbia University, when on the afternoon of November 30, 1917, his remarks at the 31st Annual Convention of the Association, caused it to establish a Committee on Standardization of Colleges (note the intent). Not unexpectedly, Jones was named Chairman.

It is probably not fortuitous that this Convention included a stimulating address, full of trenchant insights and humor by Claude M. Fuess, Secretary of the Carnegie Foundation. He spoke of Educational Surveys, primarily their values, but their defects, too. With gentle reproof, he chided the Association for admitting any college desiring its fellowship. One wonders if Jones and Fuess had conspired in advance to create a setting which would make inevitable the final outcome.

Note should be taken of the historical close cooperation between the state education departments of the territory and the Association. In these early days, this intimacy manifested itself, in one instance, in the membership of the University of the State of New York (the overreaching constitutional concept in New York which includes the State Education Department) in the Association, the designation of that Department's Assistant Commissioner for Higher Education, Augustus S. Downing, as a member of the Committee headed by Jones, and the eventual adoption of initial standards which were identical to those promulgated by New York.

In 1919, the Committee reported on its recommendations for defining an institution of higher learning, the standards to be employed in interpreting the definition, and the establishment of a Commission to be the custodian and interpreter of the standards, as well as to adopt lists of accredited institutions. Though they did not go without comment, all recommendations were adopted as presented.

Several things are noteworthy:

1. Jones did an admirable job of persuading the Association to enter into the accrediting function. The conservative East is not easily convinced of the worthiness of new academic departures. He was well informed on the history and the precedents for accrediting.

2. The definition of a college and the standards were generally quantitative ("an institution must have at least eight professors"; "there should be a minimum productive endowment, beyond all indebtedness, of at least $500,000" etc.) It is characteristic of a new accrediting agency to set quantitative standards which institutions must meet to establish their eligibility for accreditation. This is in the nature of the Anglo-Saxon tradition of fixing minimum limits below which behavior is not to be tolerated. As an accrediting agency matures, it develops in the direction of the Greek tradition of establishing norms, ideals of behavior, criteria of excellence.

3. Nevertheless, there were some qualitative standards, so defined, as Jones said, because "It is not possible to formulate a set of standards that will enforce themselves."

4. The standards were to be administered flexibly; that is, deficiencies in some could be counterbalanced by excellence in others. This policy still endures.

5. Because the definition and standards were, in some respects, general, and could not, in any case, be administered without discretion, a Commission was proposed whose purpose was to judge the extent to which institutions applying for accreditation met the standards but also to judge "the degree of conscientiousness and thoroughness and the success with which the accepted standards are being enforced" after they had become members. The aim was to induce institutions to conform more than they had; the approach was inspectoral in the exercise of a police function; the concern was with the group-self comprised of the community of institutions which has its own function of creating standards and disciplining itself. These are also symptomatic of an immature accrediting agency.

Only institutions which were liberal arts colleges or which were liberal arts divisions of universities were to be eligible for accreditation. This limitation was not surprising in view of the classical development of higher education. Other forms of higher education were simply not understood by the older and narrower community of the liberal tradition. While other types of institutions were to become eligible in due course for accreditation, it was not until 1954 that the Commission abandoned its last remaining quantitative requirement that an institution have at least two years of liberal arts in its program before it could be considered eligible for accreditation.

It is noteworthy, too, that while membership in the Association was largely unrestricted, accreditation was to result in a listing of only part of the Association's member colleges. The stage was set for a debate.

A Commission of 14 members was formed which included Jones as Chairman; three members of state education departments; three secondary school administrators; and five other representatives from higher education, including, besides Jones, four professors and only one dean.

While the absence of any college president on the first Commission may or may not be significant, the presence of five professors certainly was. It was intended that the central engagement of higher education, the teaching and the learning process, was to be the focus. The standards adopted certainly prove that at least the conditions conducive to the establishment and maintenance of quality in the intellectual function of an institution, were to be of prime concern, not the administrative aspects.[1]

Columbia, Princeton, The Johns Hopkins, the University of Pennsylvania, Haverford, and Vassar were represented in the membership. It was a distinguished group which, because it knew competence, could therefore recognize it in others.

In 1920, the Commission busied itself in developing a questionnaire ("blank") for the collection of information from colleges and in securing information, pertinent to the standards adopted, about a number of colleges from the U. S. Bureau of Education and the New York State Education Department. The Commission soon found that it had underestimated the amount of time it would take to develop the first list of accredited institutions. During the ensuing year, one of the Commission members was to complain that meetings of the Commission were called to order on daylight saving time and dismissed on Eastern Standard time. It became a familiar plaint. The Commission's standard for long hours and hard work was set early.

But more importantly, the Commission could not resist the blandishments of special pleading. From humanitarian considerations, it decided to wait one year in order to permit some borderline institutions which would otherwise have been left off the initial list, time to qualify for inclusion within the year.

In 1921, vigorous opposition was organized by several college presidents, particularly from Pennsylvania, against the adoption of an accredited list. On arriving at the entrance to the hall at Swarthmore where the convention was held, one of the protesting presidents who had previously appeared for the same purpose at a Commission meeting, was greeted by Adam Leroy Jones with, "Do we still shake hands?" During the convention, this president conceded that his earlier remarks might have been expressed with more asperity than was his custom.

As might be expected, the most turgid, emotional, and often irrelevant prayers for relief were made by presidents of institutions scheduled to be left off the initial accredited list. There were appeals to a preferred reliance on reasonable systems of standardization coming from state authority (undoubtedly, the last time this plea ever was made); references to "irreparable harm to institutions left off the list"; analogues in the "little group that guards St. Peter's gate"; "gracious womanhood"; "heirs of eternity"; and a Thanksgiving season as a "season of darkness and shadow from which they will not easily emerge."

Jones cool-headedly prevailed and put the meeting in focus, with a real assist from Wilson Farrand, a Commission member. An original list of 59 institutions approved by the Commission was accepted by the Association. Accredited membership in the Association, granted by the Commission, continues to be the policy. It is a good one.

1 In the long run, this initial emphasis shifted to more peripheral concerns and had to be re-focused in 1957.

Certain comments on the original list need to be made because they put later developments in better perspective.

1. The list included ten institutions which, eventually, either did not live up to their earlier promise or else deteriorated in competence to the point where the Commission had to act adversely, in some cases dropping them from the accredited list.

2. Although earlier it had not been contemplated that visits to institutions would be made for accreditation purposes, a suggestion at the 1920 convention that provision be made for first-hand observation was implemented. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching supplied funds which supported visits requested by any institution. One may hazard the guess that visitation was not required probably because the most competent institutions might have become disenchanted with the whole idea of accrediting on that basis. Emphasis in the visits was on inspection.

3. The defeat of the original motion put by the Pennsylvania group that the accredited list not be made public was defeated by a vote of 73 to 62. By this narrow margin, the function of accrediting of higher institutions was assumed by the Association.

4. Several institutions were publicly identified as worthy but not worthy enough for inclusion on the original list. This was a practice not followed in modern times. To divulge the name of an institution which is just not quite good enough or which is in trouble is a form of pitiless publicity probably never intended in 1921 and never practiced since.

One early practice of the Commission should not go without comment. Before action was taken on accreditation, the president of an institution was notified to appear at a Commission meeting. These appearances must sometimes have been grim solemnities or accompanied by something less than disinterested observation and comment. The Commission acted somewhat like a high tribunal. The custom was abandoned several years later as unfruitful, inhumane, and unnecessary in view of other sources of information developed by the Commission's new approaches. A recently initiated movement by the American Council on Education to coordinate the work of the various accrediting agencies in order to make their practice more uniform, resulted in the adoption by the Association in 1922 of new standards. The old ones had not lasted long.

In the first place, it was an avowed objective to the Commission to work in harmony with the standards of other accrediting interests. Secondly, the standards substituted differed little except in specific and quantitative respects from those adopted in 1919. Number eight was noteworthy in that it provided for regular visitation to new institutions seeking accreditation.

At this meeting, also, opportunity was provided for the Association to consider the eligibility of normal schools and teachers colleges for accreditation. A motion to that effect did not even receive a second. It was to be fifteen years later before traditional attitudes softened sufficiently to permit such institutions to acquire gilt by association with liberal arts colleges who were slow to relinquish their patents of academic nobility.

A noteworthy policy put into effect in 1924 was one which is still preserved to this day: namely, provision for systematic review of member institutions, although in 1924 it was not crystallized as a re-evaluation cycle. The institutions first approved in 1921 were asked again to supply questionnaire information concerning the way in which the Commission's standards were being met. The Carnegie Foundation again supported the review.

The highlight of the 1925 convention was the question raised from the floor about the desirability of including engineering institutions on the accredited list. In 1926, a motion to do so was adopted by the Association. It is puzzling how the Commission could have first established a standard of catering only to liberal arts colleges, subsequently excluded teachers colleges from its purview, and then embraced engineering institutions with their largely technical and professional curriculums.

In 1927, the first engineering schools were listed. It thus became possible, because the Commission was really accrediting programs not entire institutions, for a single institution to be listed twice on the accredited list. This happened with Villanova whose liberal arts (1921) and engineering programs (1931) were separately accredited and listed. This was an atomistic approach which would be remedied in due course. It is interesting to note that while teachers colleges and junior colleges were later to be separately listed from the other accredited institutions, engineering institutions were from the first amalgamated along with the liberal arts colleges into a single list.

In 1927, too, the Commission proposed and the Association accepted a recommendation that junior colleges be considered eligible for accreditation. Separate standards were adopted which amounted really to an abbreviated or junior version of those already existing for four-year liberal arts colleges. Junior colleges had already been considered eligible for accreditation by other regional accrediting agencies; the American Council on Education, as reported earlier, interested in promoting uniformity in accrediting throughout the United States, had sponsored the development of uniform standards.

It was not until five years later, though, that the first two junior colleges were added to the accredited list. In the meantime, the Commission had, as the police offense puts it, "loitered with intent." Junior colleges, as a form of higher education, clearly puzzled the Commission. The whole development was new; some of them were of a proprietary nature; certain of them had objectives different from those of four-year liberal arts colleges, namely, technical-terminal aims. In the end the Commission had to alter the junior college standards adopted earlier to fit realistic situations.

In 1931, it was voted by the Association that, effective in 1933, a condition of being a full member of the Association was accreditation by the appropriate Commission. Non-accredited colleges could become members of the Association by paying dues but were to be separately listed without vote.

The Commission was now over a decade in age, and it began to concern itself with (or had forced upon it) an increasing number of the major problems of higher education. Graduate work was one. Abuses in intercollegiate athletics was another which has appeared on the Commission's agenda ever since with all the annual regularity of Thanksgiving. On this perennial favorite, to use Thomas Mann's words, the Commission has worn its eyebrow permanently lifted. It is almost as if the academic community were afraid of having its otherwise undisputed virtue and exemplary conduct become monotonous.

The Commission resolved that the practice of awarding athletic scholarships was undesirable, was disapproved by the Commission, and that, beginning with 1933, any institution which granted or continued such scholarships would be held disqualified for inclusion on the accredited list. The resolution was not without inherent angularity, and, once communicated to the membership, did not go without notice or galvanic reaction in several quarters. Over the next four years, the Commission fended off all criticism and even strengthened its original policy. It voted that it would be the expectation of the Commission that a college would not only refrain from subsidizing athletics but would not permit such subsidization by alumni or others.

Beginning to be uneasy about compliance, the Commission sent a questionnaire to each college on the accredited list enrolling men, asking two questions: Whether the college was complying fully with the resolution on the granting of athletic scholarships and whether the institution was attempting to prevent the subsidizing of athletes by others. There was a complete return.

The convention report of the Commission for 1933 records:

> The Commission wishes to express its great gratification that the institutions on the approved list are observing the regulation regarding athletic scholarships and that even some of those presidents who questioned most strongly the policy adopted by the Association are complying most loyally with the regulation.

Upon reflection, it seems probable that several institutions were not in harmony with the Commission's action and that their uniform replies indicated a canting simulation of goodness. At any rate, the end of the problem was not yet in sight.

Note should be made of the anticipated need for what later became an Executive Committee of the Commission. The Commission, with its increasing volume of business, found it necessary to establish some means of securing prompt action on any questions which might be submitted for the attention of the Commission. A subcommittee of members residing in or near New York (since the Chairman and the offices were in New York City) was appointed to give an early screening to matters to be referred to the Commission. It was otherwise without power.

Note should be taken, too, that in the early history of the Commission, the question was raised by Roberts College in Istanbul whether it could be accredited by the Commission. The Commission was not unsympathetic, but this problem, too, was to appear with annoying frequency until the recent establishment of a national policy on extraterritorial jurisdiction among the regional agencies.

One final comment about 1933 is in order. It was protested that while there were 35 Roman Catholic institutions on the approved list, there was no representative of such institutions on the Commission. The Commission quite rightly replied that no member of the Commission was regarded as a representative to the Association as a whole. But it is interesting to note that at the Commission meeting at the end of the year the Commission voted to recommend to the Association that the number of members at large on the Commission be increased by one. The proceedings for 1933 show the membership of the Commission as including a representative of a Catholic institution. Thoughtlessness, protest, reaction, and accommodation were to be repeated once again.

The Commission was maturing rapidly. It was reported to the Convention in 1934 that the Commission had never interpreted its largely quantitative standards literally, they were flexible, and therefore the Commission was going to explore whether the standards could not be re-written to make it clearer that the Commission's standards were concerned with "seriousness of purpose, the honesty of aim, and the excellence of the work done."

The significant declaration of interest came in the same year that Adam Leroy Jones died. The action and his death closed one era and opened another in the life of the Commission.

Jones was an exceptional person. He deserved every encomium expressed informally and in the several eulogies formulated on his behalf. The Commission would undoubtedly have come into being some other time. But the balanced amalgam in one person of tact, high intelligence, perceptiveness, a fine sense of equity, unselfishness, earnest devotion, wide educational background, and courage in dealing with difficult situations, advanced the years of the Commission's creation and made it then, as it is now, a practical instrument and a seminal force for good.

It should not go unremarked that his skillful and harmonious blend of the concerns of a practicing faculty member with those of a pioneering director of university admissions brought a special significance to his leadership of the Commission. This unusual alliance of insights gave a broad vision and special thrust to the Commission which it has never lost. The Commission is deeply indebted to Adam Leroy Jones. He led out in front.

Wilson Farrand, then Headmaster of Newark Academy, and soon to become Clerk of the Board of Princeton University, was designated as Acting Chairman. Farrand had been a member of the Commission since its beginning and brought a wide school and college experience to the chairmanship. He was a natural choice. His brief tenure from 1934 to 1937 was characterized by a continuation of the policies which had been set in the past—all except one, that is.

The Commission and he felt a need for a Secretary who would assist in administering to a growing volume of work. It was probably thought, too, that the files and offices of the Commission should be retained in a centrally located institution of higher learning. Accordingly, Jones' successor as Director of University Admissions at Columbia, Frank Hamilton Bowles, was requested to serve as Secretary. Thus was established a familiar pattern.

One may question the logic in what seems, at this remove in time, some odd behavior, which as James Thurber's hair-raising remark has it, was not entirely unmeaningless.

A significant change was made in the junior college standards in that proprietary institutions might be considered for accreditation.[2] During the year, another question was raised about the inclusion of teachers colleges. This time the prevailing attitude of the Commission towards such institutions manifested itself in the suggestion to the Commission on Secondary Schools that the latter accredit them! It had tried every evasion.

The Commission took an action which reflected the growing uneasiness it has exhibited over the years since adopting its resolutions concerning the undesirability of athletic scholarships. At the 1935 convention Farrand reported that although the presidents of higher institutions were piously asserting they were living up to the standards, the Commission thought otherwise. The Commission had admitted that it could not enforce the standard and, therefore, was rescinding its earlier resolution. Farrand closed his report to the convention by saying:

> "...although in the face of manifest opposition we are unable to enforce the rule, the Commission takes this opportunity to reiterate its firm conviction that no college that grants athletic scholarships is worthy of a place on our accredited list."

This action in the history of the Commission has suggested facetiously to one of the chairman of the Commission that its continuing preoccupation with setting standards for intercollegiate athletics is governed by a Rule of Ten, namely, that a cycle of reform and relapse is completed every decade. There is also a derivative, a worthwhile corollary entitled the Law of Diminishing Concern: Until renewed, the intensity of the Commission's concern with intercollegiate athletics diminishes inversely as the square of the distance in years from its original sources. Finally, if a history is permitted another facetious reference, what is known as the Harvard Law of Animal Behavior is not unrelated to some aspects of accrediting and academic deportment: Under carefully controlled conditions, organisms behave as they damn well please.

The first intimation of what was to become a close cooperative relationship with all specialized accrediting agencies, was contained in a decision by the Commission, made upon request, to advise any institution with a law school that it was highly desirable for the institution to have the school accredited by the American Bar Association.

The Commission in 1936 also voted to concern itself with institutions in Puerto Rico. Favorable action was taken to increase the territory of the Association, undoubtedly, on the basis that New York City was a port of entry for emigrating Puerto Ricans and that Columbia University had long associated itself with educational work in Puerto Rico. (Was it also difficult to foreclose so early the opportunity of true junkets to the irenic and exotic Caribbean?) Similar logic eventually incorporated the Canal Zone.

Parenthetically, it should be remarked that the Middle States territory, by comparison, is still a small one. Puerto Rico and the Canal Zone add spice, of course. Nevertheless, the Commission is aware that the smallness in size of the territory creates easy accessibility and is conducive to an intimacy of interrelationships which bring flavor to its work. In short, propinquity is of special significance in the life of the Commission.

In 1936, too, the Commission voted to set up standards for the accreditation of graduate work. Such standards were later adopted but only as guides for "inspectors" rather than for setting up a graduate list of institutions.

The Commission found itself unable to resist the mounting pressure put upon it to consider teachers colleges eligible for accreditation in their own right as a form of higher learning. Accordingly, it voted to establish standards and a separate list for teachers colleges, thus, continuing the fractionated approach to the accreditation of higher education established from the beginning of its founding and reaffirmed with the admission of engineering programs and junior colleges.

2 One wonders as to the intent of this shift since the Commission also voted to alter its standards in such a way that a proprietary institution conducted primarily for profit would be unable to meet them.

The Commission vote to revise its standards for four-year colleges and junior colleges and to draw up a "Manual of Accrediting Procedure for the Use of Inspectors." The latter was not accomplished for some years. The move to review the standards was undoubtedly motivated by a similar pioneering action taken by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1934.

Wilson Farrand retired as chairman and was made the first honorary member of the Commission. David A. Robertson, President of Goucher and long a Commission member, succeeded him.

Nineteen hundred and thirty-seven saw the accreditation of the first teacher education institution, namely, Montclair State Teachers College of New Jersey. The Commission found to its surprise and delight that a state teachers college could be so good as to generate discussion in the Commission on whether it should be placed on the list as a liberal arts institution or as a teachers college. It should not go unnoticed that the Commission's favorable attitude towards Montclair was due in no small measure to the institution's president, Harry A. Sprague, who in 1938 became a member of the Commission and later an honorary member. His contribution to the Commission's work, especially in teacher education, was original, significant, and enduring.

The highlight of 1937 was the announcement of revised principles and standards for accrediting institutions of higher education. These standards were a marked departure from those originally adopted and only partially revised in isolated instances in the previous years. They were largely qualitative; urged but did not require self-evaluation of an institution as a whole. The purpose of an institution was emphasized although accreditation was not yet to be granted in terms of an institution's fulfillment of its purposes and objectives. The main emphasis was to be placed on the manner in which the institution as a whole performed its task of instruction.

One noteworthy change, probably never implemented, pertained to junior colleges. Such institutions could be wholly devoted to technical courses and still be eligible for accreditation. It is probably that the Commission at that time did not have in mind the modern terminal community college or institute recognized now as operating on the level of higher education since no such institution was accredited until 15 years later.

A questionnaire also was adopted in order to solicit information from institutions making application for accreditation and from member institutions on a three-to-five-year cycle.

The Commission was at the half-way point in evolving from quantitative to qualitative standards, from minima to norms, from emphasis on the fulfillment of technical requirements to accreditation in terms of the practical effect given to purpose, and from an atomistic or surgical concern with part of an institution to evaluation and recognition of a college as a whole.

In 1938, the Commission was first approached by institutions of narrow specialized interests for inclusion on the accredited list. This was not to occur until 16 years later. Signs appeared of organized discontent with accrediting at large, meaning the quantitative approach, the proliferation of accrediting agencies, and excessive costs, and were discussed in a memorable meeting called by the American Council on Education. In the councils of the Commission and at the Association's conventions, Robertson convincingly interpreted to the Association the work of the Commission in the light of the criticisms being leveled at accrediting.

In 1941, it was apparent that the Commission was taking unto itself an increasing number of college presidents, then six out of 12 members. It was to become an unwritten general policy in the future that the Commission should be largely composed of the chief executive officers of higher institutions.

The Association evinced its concern with the abuses of Associate membership and with the confusion caused by having a category for member institutions which were not accredited and announced its intention to change the practice in that regard. The change was finally accomplished in 1945. But one notes with interest a proposal in 1961 to make an essential return to the practice of Associate

membership, namely, a formal recognition and listing of institutions seeking candidacy for Middle States membership and accreditation.

For the first time in 1943, more than one inspector ("agent" was a popular term) was used in visiting an institution for accrediting purposes.[3] Up until this time it was ordinary practice to use only one Commission member for an institution. Eventually, an evaluation would require as many as 70 people. Granted the high ability and perceptiveness of the Commission's members to judge an institution's competence, even so, error (and, perhaps, on occasion senatorial courtesy) sometimes worked inequity. This situation, that the fate of an institution depended on one person's judgment, was to be remedied.

There were growing signs that the Commission would eventually have to address itself to the evaluation of an institution as a whole. In 1943, the Commission, upon inquiry, reaffirmed its policy that branches of an institution were not automatically accredited just because the parent institution was so blessed.

In 1944, Robertson, in his report to the convention, identified a number of issues concerning accreditation in general and the Commission's role in particular, including questions about the validity of the accrediting process and its need and purpose. His report was a litany of accrediting's woes. Mr. Robertson, wisely, had more questions than answers; and some of the questions were mean ones. He dealt with them in characteristic Commission fashion—with candor.

In 1945, the Commission, as had become its custom, once again reviewed its own policies and practices. Significant proposals were made in 1946. They were intended to shift the emphasis in accrediting procedures from the maintenance of minimum standards to the improvement of institutions of all types and on all levels. The first step in accomplishing the change involved a radical revision of the Commission's standards and the preparation of a questionnaire. A second step was a complete and systematic review of the entire higher institutional membership of the Association every 12 years. (This cycle was later modified in practice to ten.) The purpose of the visitation was to examine institutional practices in order to gather data for the eventual establishment of better criteria by which institutions could be judged for accreditation purposes. If the Commission were to evaluate institutions in terms of norms or means rather than minima, it needed actual data sampling the entire membership to define those norms. It was further anticipated that the data gathered by the inspectors would eventuate in the preparation of a series of pamphlets, each describing good practice. The final proposal was to use visitation committees and to draw on the staffs of all member institutions to staff them. It was envisioned that all major aspects and programs of an entire institution would be observed; on this basis, certainly, more than one or two people would be required. It was, also, assumed that the experience would provide excellent opportunity for exchange of insights between institutions as well as a training ground for future members. All of these things were to be realized. With the adoption of these proposals the stage was set for a new era in the life of the Commission.

David A. Robertson, who had been chairman since 1937, resigned. Bowles, Secretary since 1934, became chairman. Again the year marked the close of one era and the beginning of another. Robertson had presided as chairman during a period of unprecedented growth and change in higher education. From 1937 through 1946 could be characterized as a period of restlessness and flux in higher education. There was an increased demand for higher education as an aftermath of World War II. A marked shift in the balance of control of higher education from private auspices, was set in motion. There was increased concern with quality as a result of the post-World War II enrollments.

One may say with conviction that in the era of Robertson's nine years as Chairman, the basic ingredients were formed for fermenting unprecedented general change and what was to become an unparalleled expansion in higher education, in turn to be immediately reflected in the work of the Commission. The "ogre of exponential growth" was not yet abroad; but the beginning of biological,

3 Elder statesmen report that this was practice before 1943; if so, it is not recorded in either minutes or proceedings before then.

scientific, economic, and political revolutions, largely unrecognized then, were in progress. It is a tribute to Robertson that he perpetuated and improved on the traditions of the Commission, maintained the quality of its accrediting, recognized the increasing complexity of the Commission's work, and helped prepare the ground work for significant and timely change in policy and practice.

Mr. Robertson did one other thing. He was the first to raise the question about the desirability of an historical practice of the Commission concerning its own membership. Although terms were for three years each, the Commission had become in effect a self-perpetuating body. A person did not leave the Commission unless he died or resigned. Mr. Robertson questioned this policy in open convention and announced his own viewpoint in favor of making increased provision for rotation of membership. This was to come. The eventual result, over a period of time, was a wholesome democratization of the Commission, for which it is recognized today.

In 1947 the Commission had it nose broken. The California State Education Department declined to recognize the Middle States Association as an accrediting agency, which indicated that the Commission, in a quarter century of provincial concern, had not yet projected its nature or influence beyond the Great Divide.

The Eastern Regional Unit of the National Catholic Education Association reaffirmed what David Robertson had already alluded to, namely, the undesirability of long tenure of members of the Commission. The Commission replied that it was emphatically opposed to quota representation and that while the Commission favored a policy of reasonable rotation in its membership, it did not favor such a policy at this time because of the marked changes, requiring stability, going on in the Commission's policies and practices. Even so, as had happened once before, it is to be noted that the next year a member of another Roman Catholic institution was added to the Commission's membership.

Perhaps a word might be inserted at this juncture to characterize prevailing custom in suggesting nominations for membership on the Commission. There are no rigid rules. Due regard is paid to the proportional contribution each political subdivision makes to the total number of higher institutions in the Association. Since the Commission accredits an institution in terms of its objectives, it seeks to diversify the institutions represented: university, college, junior college, specialized institution; institutions under various sectarian auspices; institutions solely for women or for men; coeducational. Whether or not the candidate under consideration has had experience in working with the Commission on evaluation teams is of importance. Variety in the type of position held by the members is sought—professors, deans, vice-presidents, presidents. In any case, there are no quotas. No member represents only his type of institution. Some types of representation have to be achieved by indirection. Competence is essential.

It has been objected that because the Commission is small, and, therefore, cannot directly represent all viewpoints in its membership, and because the workload is increasingly heavy, the Commission should be expanded. This would be fatal in the view of those who have worked with it. There are examples elsewhere of the consequences of undue size. Expansion would only dilute the deep individual sense of responsibility for the accomplishment of the Commission's mission and reduce the singular devotion and hard work now characterizing the membership. The Commission now has a custom of reaching unanimous consensus on all accreditation and major issues, by compromise if necessary. Its nature as a seamless domestic dispensation would be seriously jeopardized by vast increase. One other thing would happen: With a larger membership, the Commission would intensify and overbalance its professional secretariat and diminish it own voluntary character.

In 1947, declaring a moratorium on new accreditations, the Commission conducted seven pilot inspections according to the new procedures involving a visitation team, new standards, and an enlarged questionnaire. The outcome confirmed the merits envisioned for the new approach.

In 1948, Bowles became Director of the College Entrance Examination Board. In a sense he never left home: The Middle States Association had spawned that institution and Columbia had contributed so greatly to it, that in some minds the Board was considered an adjunct of Columbia. With the increasing work of the Commission, Bowles thought that it should again have a secretary, which position had

been vacant since he left in 1946 to assume the chairmanship. Bowles' successor as Director of University Admissions at Columbia, Ewald B. Nyquist, was selected. Thus the Commission's offices continued, for the time being, to remain at Columbia.

The year 1949 reflected in the Commission deliberations, rising national concern over the abuses and evils of accrediting and the Commission's commendable participation in national conferences on the subject. The Commission's experiences in evaluating an institution as a whole, particularly a large university, with the assistance of representatives from professional fields and accrediting agencies, were reported as auguring well for the reduction and simplification of accrediting in the future.

The marked expansion in the activity of the Commission suggested that it needed to be recognized and enlarged. One may anticipate the action taken in the following year when the Association adopted constitutional provisions for enlarging the Commission from 12 to 15 members; restricting membership to no more than two consecutive terms, except that the officers of the Commission could serve at the pleasure of the Commission (this was done to provide stability and to recognize the historical leadership role which the Chairman and the officers had provided); and creating a Vice Chairmanship. The first Vice Chairman was Paul D. Shafer, President of Packer Collegiate Institute.

Without in any sense diminishing the Commission's pronounced effectiveness, it would not be unfair to ascribe to the Commission's organization over the years an amiable slackness. Up until this time the leadership was personal, activity was individual, relationships were informal, the workload had not really required system and extensive organization. Sometimes the Chairman had carried the Commission in a back pocket. Policy was largely kept in the collective wisdom of the Commission and transmitted to the occasional new member by the process of osmosis provided by close fellowship.

It was in 1949, too, that the first overture was made to the Association's Commission on Secondary Schools to conduct joint evaluations of institutions having both secondary and collegiate programs. It crystallized into a standing policy.

Mr. Bowles, having left Columbia, felt, therefore, that since he no longer represented a member institution of the Association, he should resign as Chairman. E. Kenneth Smiley, Vice President of Lehigh University, was elected to succeed him. Mr. Bowles' contribution to the Commission was outstanding. He brought to it the extensive insights, embracing school and college articulation, frequently but not always associated with the experience of being an admissions officer. He had been simultaneously engaged in accrediting on a national basis for 13 years as a member and as Secretary of the Committee on Classification of the Association of American Universities. His friendliness, constructive imagination and unselfish devotion brought a new plateau of experience and usefulness to the Commission. He created a solid platform from which his successor could launch even more marked departures. He had been the chief architect of the changes which transported (the word is used advisedly) the Commission, not so much in a different direction but onto a different plane of accelerated change. Seldom, in academic affairs, are there successful attempts to introduce novelty vectors. Bowles did.

E. Kenneth Smiley served as Chairman of the Commission for only a little over three years, from 1950 to 1953. But it was a period of the most startling kind and extent of activity, brought about by an increased complexity in relationships between the Commission, its constituency, and national organizations in accrediting work. During his comparatively brief tenure as Chairman, the Commission assumed a captaincy in accrediting affairs which is recognized nationally.

Junior colleges had long felt unloved. Paul Shafer was deliberately made Vice Chairman of the Commission in order to bring into proper focus in the Commission's work, the place, meaning, and importance of junior colleges and their burgeoning growth in the form of community colleges.

Conferences were initiated with all other agencies having an interest in accreditation. Cooperative relationships were formally established with state education departments and professional accrediting agencies, looking toward an elimination of duplication of effort and an increased effectiveness on behalf of the improvement of higher education. Joint questionnaires were developed; a policy of mutual exchange of confidential information was established; joint schedules of visitation were

organized, and a practice of common use of evaluative personnel, to represent both the Commission and the agencies concerned, was inaugurated.

The Commission thus provided leadership in reducing what had become intensified professionalism (hardening of the categories) in the proliferated development of accrediting work.

The Commission established close relationships with the National Commission on Accrediting which had been formed to control, reduce, and give national leadership to the accrediting movement. The National Commission, in the full early vigor of giving initial practical effect to its crusading cause, made brave pronouncements and uttered "majestic incoherences" about abolishing accrediting. The presidents composing the National Commission soon found, for one thing, that their courage did not have the support of the contrary convictions of the faculties in their own institutions. But, just as important, the Commission, on the basis of its own new developments in philosophy, viewpoint, practice, and cooperative relationships with other agencies of specialized interest, was not without early influence on the National Commission on Accrediting. It assisted in setting the National Commission in the positive direction of fostering accrediting for the benefit of higher education. Mr. Smiley summed it up at the 1950 convention.

> "I am happy to report that many expressed fears of inimical relationships between the Commission and the regional accrediting associations appear to be without substantial cause."

New scandals in intercollegiate athletics forced the Commission to develop criteria of excellence in intercollegiate athletics which had widespread influence in reducing abuses.

The Commission increased its efficiency and ability to cope with an ever increasing workload. Formal provision was made for an Executive Committee composed of five Commission members, including the officers. By this time, too, it was clearly established that the Commission needed full time assistance to conduct its affairs. It is worthy of note that in moving to employ an Executive Secretary,

> "The Chairman expressed regret that...the Commission would be professionalizing …[itself] in that voluntary services would no longer be adequate to consummate the business of the Commission. It was agreed that the dangers inherent in such professionalizing would constitute a matter of regular and careful scrutiny, and if found present, peremptorily eliminated. "

It is eloquent testimony to F. Taylor Jones, former Registrar of Drew University and the Commission's Executive Secretary since 1953, that the only difference the Commission and its constituency ever noticed in the transfer from a voluntary to a professionalized basis of support, was a wholesome one. It is appropriate to pause and to recognize the superb performance and contribution made by F. Taylor Jones. He has brought to the Commission and its member institutions keen academic insights and an extraordinary devotion and commitment to the values of the accrediting function. His marked literary skill has clearly added luster to the substantive content of the Commissions' documents and contributed to their national distribution. His tact and skill in handling difficult situations, of which there are no small number in accrediting work under the best of circumstances, are considerable. In the words of Carl Becker, he has few peers and no equals.

A noteworthy step taken by the Commission at this time was the redefinition of the criteria defining eligibility for accredited membership in the Association. All higher institutions, including professional and highly specialized institutions, were now considered eligible for accreditation (adopted in 1952 but effective January 1, 1954). Thus was a problem solved that had been on the Commission's agenda for two decades. The basis for including the entire community of higher education within the Commission's purview was a simple one: "A growing consciousness of common heritage and tasks of all higher education institutions.

Henceforth, all non-profit institutions of higher education, whose curriculums provided, emphasized, or rested upon a general or liberal education, were to be eligible for consideration. The last quantitative requirement of the Commission, two years of liberal arts, had been abolished. From now on, graduate institutions, technical institutes, and schools of music and art, among others, were regarded as eligible for accreditation.

The Commission, previously well-intentioned but long unable to do so, began to develop and publish various documents describing good practice and policy in various areas of the Commission's concern. At this time, they included intercollegiate athletics and master's degree programs.

The increasing democratization of the Commission must be commented on. Roughly, up until about 1946, the Commission had been a self-perpetuating body exercising policing functions in the maintenance of minimum standards. During Mr. Bowles' chairmanship, and increasingly under Mr. Smiley's, several moves were made to make the Commission less exclusive than it had been. Institutions were not particularly representative of the Association's membership. They were usually those considered most distinguished—the Brahmins of the academic world. The nature of institutional representation changed.

The provision for rotation of membership; the inclusion of women as Commission members; the use of non-Commission members in evaluative work and their attendance at Commission meetings; the attendance, too, of representatives of other agencies interested in accrediting work throughout the country; acknowledgment of all higher education as within the purview of the Commission; the provision of a broader base for the determination of policy (a larger Commission); and, finally, the use of important advisory groups composed of others besides the Commission members, all brought a wider circle of influence to bear on the Commission's affairs. A by-product was increased communication of the Commission's work, regionally as well as nationally, and a deeper understanding of it. Accrediting had become complex and needed constant interpretation. The Commission was no longer a closed corporation. It had become an organization, an institution, and not solely an idea.

Mr. Smiley retired as Chairman in 1953. His successor was Ewald B. Nyquist, then Assistant Commissioner for Higher Education in the New York State Education Department. It should be noted that two years previously, when he left Columbia, the Commission's offices had moved to Albany, thus bringing to a close, on the one hand, a long period of direct affectionate relationship between Columbia University and the Commission, and deepening, on the other, a relationship with the New York State Education Department which the Commission had had from the beginning. It had been characteristic of the Association that its activities heretofore had centered in a few places (Philadelphia and New York City; the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University; and Germantown Friends School). The Commission owes an unusual debt of gratitude to Columbia.

The removal from Columbia of the Commission's offices, the employment of an Executive Secretary, and the achievements of the Commission under Mr. Smiley's leadership characterized again, as similar developments had in the past, the close of one phase in the Commission's life and the launching of a new one.

Mr. Smiley gave the departures initiated by his predecessor an amplitude and influence not envisioned earlier. Under his direction, the Commission was interpreted nationally. His gift for administrative organization enabled the Commission to embrace an unprecedented volume of activity. His talent for a cogent and sparkling phrase, his grace as a presiding officer, and his lambent humor which irradiated everyone within reach and illumined the most complex, academic issues, made it easy for the Commission to do its work and dissolved even the most noble intransigence in the group. He had the courage in facing issues which Ernest Hemingway defined as "grace under pressure." In modern terms, he brought fusion where fission might have prevailed. In the language of the Navy, the Commission was "a happy ship." The Commission owes him much.

The rest of the history of the Commission can best be presented by summarizing the prevailing concepts and attitudes of the Commission identified as evolutionary end-products of long term trends.

The Commission is characterized by several general policies which have undergone extensive refinement over the years. The Commission:

1. Considers and helps every institution within its purview. For instance, consultative service is provided to non-member institutions from the date of their founding. The Commission spends just as much time, proportionately, helping non-member institutions become more competent as it does with member institutions. This is as it should be for the broad purpose of the

Association is the improvement of education through mutual assistance and encouragement and the extension of educational opportunity.

2. Gives proportionately the same consideration to large institutions as it gives to small ones. The Commission gives just as thorough an evaluation to a university as it does to the smallest junior college.

3. Considers all programs within institutions in their relation to the institution as a whole. Another way of stating this principle is the Commission believes in a holistic philosophy which suggests that an institution as a whole is greater than a sum of its parts. An evaluation, hence accreditation, extends to an institution's entire corporate behavior.

4. Adjusts its criteria for recognition in terms of a cross-section of the accredited institutions within its purview, rather than in terms of marginal institutions or in terms of the highest ranking ones. Accreditation is based on norms rather than on minima. To establish points of reference for an institution, a document entitled, *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*, is published.

5. Enlists the largest possible number of participants in its membership. This principle provides democracy in the Commission's proceedings and develops a cross-fertilization of ideas throughout the membership.

6. Provides for constant review, criticism, and readjustment of its criteria, policies, and procedures. The Commission is a restless creature but does not spend its time just "polishing and reworking trivia." Furthermore, like any good accrediting agency in administering to its affairs, it spends some time in peeking around corners, looking for trouble not yet here.

7. Deals with education as it is, not in terms of an impossible perfection. That is to say, the Commission appreciates and has an understanding of human weakness. It does not, on the other hand, define compassion as suspended judgment.

8. Examines an institution in terms of the appropriateness and adequacy of its own purposes, and the degree and competency with which it fulfills them. The Commission has no standardized matrix to press upon any institution.

9. Provides for systematic review of member institutions by operating on a ten-year re-evaluation cycle.

10. Provides for growth through the stimulus of self-evaluation on the basis that improvement which comes from within is more virtuous than that which is compelled or suggested from without.

11. Employs qualitative criteria only.

12. Is under the full control of the institutions in the Association. The Commission is a creature of its constituency.

13. Treats institutions and their staffs with the dignity they warrant and honors their essential equality, freedom, and autonomy. The Commission does not employ the police function, public sanctions, or pitiless publicity. Furthermore, it is careful that it does not "helpfully fence in" its member institutions. The extreme brand of wickedness, as someone has suggested, is that which "wears a shiny mourning face and always claims the very best of intention." The Commission in recent years, and not from any notion of sentimental egalitarianism, completed the abolition of separate listing of categories of institutions. It now amalgamates into one alphabetic listing by political subdivision all institutions from junior colleges to universities.

The Commission has evolved some deep-seated convictions:

1. Accrediting can be defined as the formal recognition of an institution based on an analysis of the merits of its operations in terms of its aims. More important, however, the single function of the Commission is to help improve the quality of higher education in its region. The viewpoint is that accreditation is simply a means to that end. It is not important of itself, but only a stimulus to institutional improvement and as a recognition of sound achievement by those who are in the best position to assess it—mature, experienced colleagues.

The concern of the Commission, therefore, is not to restrict the accredited list but to enlarge it by doing everything possible to aid institutions become worthy of inclusion in it; but since the Commission is responsible for accreditation, it must handle it honestly. It is determined, at the same time, to use it as a constructive force.

There are two concerns in handling accreditation and its attendant processes. The first and most important is the institutional-self towards which the process of self-evaluation and evaluation is directed. Here freedom is to be used to achieve excellence. There is also the group-self, alluded to earlier, comprised of the community of institutions which has its own function of policing itself.

2. The Commission is a form of voluntary cooperation and self-government. As such, it is an American phenomenon, a necessary adjunct of the nation's educational effort, for there is no central educational authority.

Loosely controlled by local boards of governance, colleges and universities have a great deal of freedom but this freedom is not just "plain freedom period," meaning that colleges can do as they please. Freedom without values only "creates latitude for error," as someone has pointed out.

In order to exercise the freedom granted to colleges and universities, and conversely in order not to lose control to outside authority, colleges and universities banded together in various ways to form accrediting societies. In substitution for external restraint and to show their appreciation of the responsibilities of liberty, colleges themselves provided various forms of self-control in order to ensure that at least minimum standards of academic performance would be maintained and in order to assure the public, and each other, that colleges could be trusted with the liberty granted to them to work out their own destinies and to achieve educational maturity and competence. Accrediting, then, can be conceived of as a public responsibility. It is accountability for stewardship of a public trust, and in the academic world, as pointed out by the current president of the National Commission on Accrediting, accrediting is another manifestation of the fundamental precept of democracy, liberty under law.

3. Highly competent institutions may question the necessity for accrediting, at least insofar as it pertains to them. The attitude of the Commission is that the best of institutions, if only on a noblesse oblige basis, are obligated through the accrediting process, to reveal standards and procedures for distinguished work, thereby performing a service to the whole community of higher education. On the other hand, the Commission has had some occasions, often invited, to challenge the contentment of higher competence. There are splendid institutions within any association which, by reason of isolation and self-content, sometimes fail to do the work of which they are capable. Someone, a wit, has suggested that such institutions are those which think the horizons around them are equidistant on all sides from their own campuses.

4. The Commission knows, with ample evidence, that a goodly number of higher institutions have achieved notable maturity and competence and have consistently exercised a responsibility in discharging their obligations as educational institutions. These colleges exhibit the most consistent self-control and demonstrate the deepest insight into the aim and achievement of their own existence.

It also knows that, while some of the member institutions maintain adequate standards, they are still not able to perform, without extensive assistance, a satisfactory self-evaluation of their own purposes and affairs, have less sharply defined goals, or fall too short still of attaining the aims they have. These, then, are not as mature and competent as the others.

The Commission now believes that accrediting procedures should take fuller account of these differences in institutions.

5. The Commission is firmly wedded to the idea of cooperation with all professional accrediting agencies in the evaluation of specialized institutions and professional units within complex institutions in order to increase the effectiveness of all the organizations concerned and to decrease interference with the work of the institutions evaluated.

6. The Commission is committed to the principle of evolutionary, not revolutionary, development in the refinement of the accreditation process. Modern terminology is not simply a re-minting of the verbal currency in vogue in 1921. Rather, gradually, new viewpoints and concepts have been infused into the accrediting process.

Accreditation has moved historically from quantitative to qualitative grounds; from minima to norms, from inspection to evaluation; from standards to criteria of academic excellence; from the police function to one of institutional improvement; and from organizational patterns and physical resources to the relation between teacher and learner.

The Commission believes that the organization, administration, services, and resources of an institution are important only insofar as they facilitate the discovery and dissemination of knowledge, only as they support or handicap the teaching and the learning process. If the institution's primary reason for existence is to bring about a favorable environment for learning and understanding, this is where its effectiveness needs to be tested. All the other aspects of its life should be examined from the standpoint of their bearing upon teaching, learning, and the increase of knowledge.

This is easier to say than to do. The Commission is committed to it, and has made some progress in exploring the problem. The search for better ways to assess and strengthen an institution's service to the minds of its students is the Commission's chief project in the next decade.

It is noteworthy to record the process of agonizing reappraisal which the Commission gave to its own work from 1954 on looking towards the completion of the first ten-year re-evaluation cycle for member institutions. The Commission was not to be caught with its plans down. Activities were arranged both internally within the Commission and with the Association's membership to answer four broad questions:

1. Has the re-evaluation process for member institutions been worth its cost in time and money to the institution concerned?

2. If the process is retained in substantially its present form, how can it be made more useful to the institution?

3. Would the substitution of some other project be more valuable to member institutions?

4. What should the Commission's general program be after the current reevaluation cycle?

In 1957 the Association honored its Commission by accepting the following proposals without dissent. They are readily understandable in view of previous comments.

1. That the initial Middle States membership and accreditation continue to be based on institutional evaluation as heretofore.

2. That the policy of periodic re-evaluation of member institutions, normally at ten-year intervals, be continued.

3. That the policy of cooperation with recognized accrediting agencies of specialized interest be reaffirmed.

4. That the principles that evaluation should be oriented to the institution and its welfare be reaffirmed, and, therefore, that the Commission be free to adapt the reevaluation process to the interest of the member institution when it seems desirable to the Commission to do so, retaining, however, the principles of self-evaluation and personal visitation.

5. That primary attention in evaluation be given increasingly to the intellectual work of an institution, to instruction and the academic process rather than administration.

6. That the Commission continue, as its means permit, such services as its analyses of the characteristics which make for excellence in higher education and its publication of descriptions of good educational practice.

Four of the policies simply reaffirmed and strengthened what the Commission had already been doing. Two rather new departures were made, namely, to increase the flexibility of the re-evaluation process to take account of differences in competence and uniqueness, and, secondly, that primary attention in evaluation be given to the intellectual work of the institution.

The Commission has experimented for four years in the evaluation of member institutions, in particular with giving practical effect to the new policy calling for versatility in procedures. The possibilities for adapting the accrediting process have fulfilled the initial expectations of the principal architects and have disclosed the fears of others who reasoned that old values would be lost and that the institutions could not be treated differently. Already, a Commission document has been drafted to codify the principles illustrated in numerous special plans approved and carried out by the Commission.

Finally, it may be stated that the Commission has published a considerable number of documents which have had national distribution. These now include such statements of good educational practice as Graduate Work; Functions of Boards of Trustees in Higher Education; Conditions and Responsibilities of Employment in Higher Education; and Junior Colleges and Community Colleges: Practical Suggestions for Faculties, Trustees, and Others.

In 1959 Albert E. Meder, Jr., Vice Provost and Dean of The University, Rutgers, became Chairman. Under his vigorous leadership of a highly competent Commission, the Commission has preserved those of its fine traditions and is already experiencing the effects of continued evolutionary growth in function, service, and membership. Old, run-of-the-milltown problems return to haunt (recent scandals in intercollegiate athletics, which customarily arrive in the early years of each decade; who is responsible for the accreditation of graduate work; what should be done with NCATE); new ones arise (the conduct of foreign study programs); and there is the urgency of giving full practical effect to the Commission's recently enlarged and refurbished mandates. Even as this is read, the Association will be asked to increase the income of the Commission simply because its workload has already outstripped the capacity of its professionally employed manpower. The Commission is experiencing the anxieties accompanying success, as someone has remarked. And with these, as the English say, the Commission can cope.

There is perhaps one new vigilance assumed by the Commission, or is it an old fear simply revived in the modern era? The Association, and hence, its Commission, is characterized by an unusual degree of independence and freedom in a society which is rapidly becoming not only more complex than ever before but which, as an historian has said, seems to require more and increasingly remote controls of one sort or another to operate. The Commission is a voluntary effort and one of self-control and self-government, acting in behalf of the Association's membership. Shifting concepts, patterns of action, and interrelationships are characteristic in a breathless era where the past is no longer a guide. The Federal government, too, is becoming more prominent in all segments of society, including higher education. Support can become associated with control.

The Commission is fully aware that the safeguards against the encroachment of central authority and the consequent diminution of freedom and control under its own direction, are constant scrutiny and revision of procedure and policy based on tested validity and good judgment. Competence provides it own freedom.

The Commission may have acquired the patina of middle age. Yet one may conclude, too, that its continued virility and fresh approach to the improvement of higher education, and its uncompromising commitment to excellence, suggest a renewal of faith in an old cliche, that life begins at forty.[4]

Chairs of the Commission: 1919-1989

Adam Leroy Jones	1919-1934
Wilson H. Farrand	1934-1937
David A. Robertson	1937-1946
Frank H. Bowles	1946-1950
E. Kenneth Smiley	1950-1953
Ewald B. Nyquist	1953-1959
Albert E. Meder, J r.	1959-1967
Frank P. Piskor	1967-1970
Elizabeth J. McCormack	1970-1974
R. Lee Hornbake	1974-1976
Milton G. Bassin	1976-1980
G. Bruce Dearing	1980-1984
Rose M. Channing	1984-1985
Edward V. Ellis	1985-1987
Sarah R. Blanshei	1987-Present

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4 As this history reveals, there was a gestation period of two years: 1919-21. The pangs of parturition began in 1921 with the publication of the first accredited list.

The Middle States Association At Age One Hundred

The Last Twenty-five Years: Issues and Challenges 1887-1987

"Education should be humane."
Ewald B. Nyquist, 1914-1987

"He shall have a noble memory."
William Shakespeare

"There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance."
Socrates

Foreword

March 1887: Pennsylvania College presidents meet to procure favorable legislation with respect to taxation of college property. Preliminary consideration given to forming an organization.

And so began a one-hundred year pursuit of excellence in education. If history is a chronological record of events in the life of an institution, then the many bound volumes of *Proceedings* on file in the Association's headquarters do indeed record in detail past events. Minutes of meetings of the Board of Trustees, of the Commissions and Assembly lend further documentation. On many occasions, summarv oral histories have been presented at annual meetings, and in printed form in information bulletins (e.g., 1955 and 1981); in the 75-Year Review (1961); and in North Central Association's Quarterly (1978).

The most recent and quite definitive summaries of the Association's history and the development of education and accreditation in the United States were presented to the Association's constituency at the December 1986 Annual Meeting by Ewald B. Nyquist and Martin Meyerson; their accounts will appear in the 1986 Proceedings. Others who have prepared summaries in one form or another include Charles William Eliot, Nicholas Murray Butler, Seth Low, Edward H. Magill, Wilson Farrand, Woodrow Wilson and many others, giants all in education in the United States. To read through *Proceedings* and/or Minutes of the years 1887 through 1900 is an exciting journey through the minds of the founders. However, it must be noted that in the very early handwritten Minutes of Board meetings, an aura of individual immortality existed: precise dates in some instances were not included and, now and then, full names and affiliations were omitted. Still, one gains a sense of their goals and aspirations, goals and aspirations that motivate more recent participants in the work of the Association, its

Commissions and Assembly. These include Sarah Gibson Blanding, Frank H. Bowles, Margaret Trumbull Corwin, Millard E. Gladfelter, Sister Hildegarde Marie Mahoney, Ewald B. Nyquist, Eric A. Walker—their names and those of many others are forever linked to the Association's history.

Not to be overlooked are past and current members of the professional staffs, among them: F. Taylor Jones (CHE 1953)*, 1. R. Kraybill (CSS 1945)*, Robert Kirkwood (CHE), Frederick Aho (CSS), John A. Stoops (AES 1980)*, Abner H. Flury (CSS), Calvin L. Crawford (MSA 1964)*, Robert Cresswell (CSS), William H. Etsweiler, Jr., (CSS), Dorothy G. Petersen (CHE), and Harry W. Porter (CHE). (*First professional appointment to the respective unit.)

All those named and, again, many, many others—Board members, members of the Commissions and Assembly, evaluation team chairs and members—have played a major role in the Association's One Hundred Years in the Pursuit of Excellence, and the pursuit goes on. It can be said of all, beginning with the 1887 participants, through and including 1987 participants (with an apology to Lord Chesterfield), they adorned whatever subject they either spoke or wrote upon, by the most splendid eloquence; to this we add their subsequent "splendid" actions.

The years have been marked by many changes: institutional "inspections" have become evaluations by peers; evaluation criteria have moved from quantitative to qualitative; from the exclusion of institutions for now meaningless reasons to the inclusion of all institutions appropriately chartered and authorized to award diplomas or degrees. Innovations: high school equivalency diplomas, external degree programs, universities without walls, work-study programs, and testing to determine a student's aptitude for success in a college/university milieu, (see The College Board: Its First Fifty Years, Claude M. Fuess, 1967.) While it can be said that the College Board was "Eliot's (Harvard University) and Butler's (Columbia University) Triumph" it was Wilson Farrand, President of the Middle States Association (1896-98), who set the stage for the Association to sponsor establishment of the College Entrance Examination Board. And, in November 1900, The Board, as it is familiarly known, came into being with MSA's blessings.

There have been setbacks: differences of opinion in the roles of federal and state governments; in MSA Board, Commissions, and Assembly approaches to operational procedures; in cooperative relations with professional accrediting agencies at the higher institutional level that waned and were reborn; a lawsuit against the Association by a proprietary institution (now closed)—a suit ultimately won by the Association; threats of other lawsuits; removal of accreditation from institutions at all levels, for good and sound reasons. These and other issues, such as institutional accountability, consumer protection, affirmative action, functions of boards of trustees, the role of women and Blacks on the educational scene and in its hierarchy—issues which serve to keep the Association and its accrediting units vigilant and active.

It can be said, as of this date, that relations are reasonable and good with federal, state, and local governments, professional accrediting agencies and, in particular, with the institutional constituency. Reasonable men and women have "reasoned together" in the past and continue to do so.

Many "firsts" accrue to the Association: the naming of women and Blacks and lay persons to membership on the Board of Trustees, the Commissions and Assembly; the first woman ever to serve as president of any of the six regional Associations (Margaret Trumbull Corwin, 1946-47); candidacy, a status of affiliation with the accrediting units for new and/or established institutions seeking accredited status; women and Blacks on the unit professional and support staffs.

Many of these and other issues are expanded upon in the updated history (1987) of the Middle States Association prepared by Richard D. Challener, Professor of History at Princeton University, and former member of the Commission on Higher Education (1978–1984).

December 1987: A CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION - THE FINALE!

—Dorothy P. Heindel
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
August 1987

Introduction

The Middle States Association, unlike Gaul or the standard college lecture, is divided into four parts—the Commission on Higher Education (until 1969 the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education), the Commission on Secondary Schools, the Association itself, and the Assembly of Elementary Schools. The centennial history which follows will focus on each of these component units in turn, with particular emphasis upon the two commissions because their role in accreditation gives them a life and autonomy of their own and because, rightly or wrongly, many educators identify with one or the other and are often tempted to regard them as the Association. But the Association, particularly in the last quarter century, has had a history of its own, especially in trying to articulate the separate, distinct and often fiercely independent worlds of secondary and higher education. Moreover, it was the Association which gave birth to and which has nourished the Assembly, the newest and most tender plant in the Middle States landscape. Finally, because previous MSA anniversaries have spawned fifty and seventy-five year histories and because the late Ewald B. Nyquist has written so eloquently and wisely about the early history of the organization—what follows will focus on the last twenty-five years, from 1962 to 1987. But there is good reason, besides the existence of other authoritative texts, for so doing: the changes in American education in the past twenty-five years have produced more challenges to the commissions and to the Association than anything that happened in the first three quarters of a century since a small group of Pennsylvania educators met in 1887 in Harrisburg to form an organization "to seek at the hands of the present Legislature the passage of a new act…to render impossible the further taxation of any property of institutions of learning" and thereby created what was to become the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

—Richard D. Challener
Princeton, New Jersey
August 1987

The Commission on Higher Education

"The history of the accreditation movement can be summarized in three words which successively have characterized it, to which a fourth should now be added"—so wrote F. Taylor Jones, the Executive Secretary of the (then) Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, in 1956. "It began as standardization. Then it moved to inspection to make sure that the standards were being lived up to. From that it has progressed to evaluation, a qualitative assessment of achievement rather than on *a priori* commitment to a process. The next emphasis should be on stimulating and aiding the realization of objectives. This ought to be the conscious purpose of our evaluation process."

Indeed, by the time that the Middle States Association had reached its seventy-fifth anniversary—and the Commission its forty-third—the norms and procedures of the Commission had already evolved into something strikingly close to their contemporary form. In 1954, for example, the CHE had dropped the last of its quantitative requirements: that a college, to be accredited, must offer two years of education in the liberal arts. Henceforth, it would be "sufficient if an institution's programs provided, emphasized or rested upon liberal education." The door was at last being opened for the participation of teachers' colleges, community colleges and specialized institutions as equals within the ranks of the accredited and anointed. What the late Commissioner Ewald B. Nyquist has called the process of the democratization of accreditation was well underway.

In 1957, at a special meeting at Princeton, an assembly of presidents and administrators, who had been called together to assess the work of the Commission in the preceding decade, reaffirmed such principles as the centrality of self-evaluation and the need to evaluate an institution in terms of its purposes and objectives and how well it achieved them. The assembly also re-emphasized the principle that accrediting procedures should focus upon the quality of instruction and not the adequacy of finances or administration. It sustained the ten-year cycle for the re-accreditation of institutions which had been established after World War II. The Princeton meeting, underlining the

principle that the purpose of an evaluation was to serve an institution of higher education and not the Commission recommended one innovation: that the processes and procedures of re-evaluation should be adapted to the special needs and interests of individual Institutions, "with freedom to adopt … experimentally and differentially." Clearly, standardization and quantification had been replaced by the search for quality and excellence.

But, twenty-five years ago, the universe of the CHE still comprised fewer than 300 accredited institutions and only about three dozen potential members. The principal work of the commission involved sending out about fifty evaluation teams per year. However, in the 'sixties the Commission soon found itself forced to confront the sea changes which the rapid, untrammeled and sometimes unfocused expansion of American education were already producing. The list of wave-making developments is almost endless: among the more important, the multiplication of new two-year community colleges, the creation of public state-wide multi-campus systems, the conversion of teachers' colleges to all-purpose institutions, the expansion of graduate education, and the proliferation of off-campus educational activities of a bewildering variety.

No less significant was the growing role of the Federal government in education. As Washington increased its grants to institutions of higher education, it directly linked eligibility for federal funding to accreditation. In consequence, as Taylor Jones noted, "suddenly a number of curious institutions have acquired an ardent and completely new longing for accreditation." But, Jones also pointed out, their need was real. "A college really has no choice anymore about accreditation. Social and economic impediments increasingly harass institutions which lack it.... A new college can develop amazingly fast these days if it has the expressed confidence of a regional accrediting body. Without such expression it is utterly stymied."

The Commission responded though not always with alacrity or unbounded joy. The November 1961 Commission minutes laconically report that the first proposal to create a new category of institutional candidacy for accreditation "as a half way status was referred unenthusiastically to the Executive Committee for further study." Ultimately, in 1965 the Commission approved the creation of a complicated (and since simplified) system of categories of Correspondents of the Commission, Certified Correspondents and Recognized Candidates. Jones was candid about the reason: "We opened the new categories largely in order to let the younger colleges have a shot at the Federal largess which various laws have suddenly made available."

Similarly, the growing interest of the Federal government—and the Johnson administration in particular—in vocational and technical education impacted upon the Commission from the mid-'sixties on. It was clear, too—given the connection between eligibility for funding and accreditation—that these vocational and technical schools would have to be accredited, and soon pressure mounted upon the regionals to include them within their universe. Initially it did not seem a serious issue for the Commission; the inclusion of community colleges seemed to cover most vocational technical education in the Middle States area. As late as 1968 Taylor Jones could report that the CHE had had no requests for accreditation from any such institutions. Moreover, in response to inquiries from the Office of Education he was able to demonstrate that existing vocational/technical institutions were, for one reason or other, ineligible to apply. But the matter was taken under consideration.

By the end of the decade a special study committee on occupational education had been created to examine the issue of accreditation, and by 1972, after long examination of the issues involved, vocational/technical institutions were also added to the Commission's ranks. Significantly, the operative statement made it clear that this was done "as further assurance to governmental and other agencies that the Commission is not ignoring this vital aspect of education."

No less challenging to the Commission and its work were the great social changes in American society in the 'sixties—the increasing demands of Blacks, of women, of students, of various minorities for recognition and often reform—in American education. The CHE can rightfully claim a leadership role in recognizing women. As early as 1947 Margaret Trumbull Corwin, Dean of what was then New Jersey College for Women at New Brunswick was elected to the Commission, and before the 'sixties were over she had been joined by Sarah Gibson Blanding of Vassar, Mother Eleanor O'Byrne of Manhattanville, Elizabeth Geen of Goucher, Sister Hildegarde Mahoney of the College of St. Elizabeth,

and Elizabeth J. McCormack of Manhattanville. The latter joined the CHE in 1968 and two years later became the first woman to chair the Commission. Moreover, in 1957, under the leadership of Ewald Nyquist, the Commission had published a document, "Women in Institutions of Higher Education," which included, among many what were then liberal statements, the declaration, "When women are employed they should work under the same conditions as their male colleagues in respect of salary, promotion, tenure, and retirement, and their rank, as that of all other faculty and staff members, should depend wholly on their competence as individuals." But the first Black, William V. Lockwood, then Dean of the Faculty at the Harbor Campus of the Community College of Baltimore, was not elected to the Commission until 1969. He was followed, a year later, by Herman R. Branson, the President of Lincoln University, but it was not until the mid-'eighties that a Black educator, Edward V. Ellis, become chair.

And while twenty-five years ago approximately 18% of the some 306 individuals who served on evaluation teams were women, there were no Blacks on any teams. Nor for that matter, in 1962-63 did any Hispanics serve, even on teams that were evaluating Puerto Rican institutions. Moreover, the question of the relation between integration and accreditation was still troubling. As one report of 1967 reads, "The factor of change poses certain problems both in theory and practice. In theory: what is, for example, the responsibility of the Middle States Association for such social values as integration? In practice: when does involvement in educational opportunity for the underprivileged become an evaluative criterion for high quality?" Though it should be added that in the 'sixties the Commission was also slow to move in the direction of electing any representatives, regardless of race or gender, from community and non-traditional colleges. In these instances true democratization was to come only in the next decade.

These many and varied developments also raised new concerns about quality and excellence which ranged from questions about the purpose of community colleges to the issue of whether new graduate programs were being added without sufficient faculty resources and library holdings. But above all, they forced the Commission, especially when it began to confront the ever mounting number of new candidate institutions, to face up to what Taylor Jones properly described as the "inherent dichotomy of our responsibility." "On the one hand we are a service agency, devoted to helping every institution reach its highest potential of maturity and educational effectiveness; we are wholly on its side in its effort to do so. On the other hand we are also a certifying agency, representing the academic world in identifying the moment at which individual institutions reach a point which warrants the academic world's full confidence in them."

The CHE sought in many ways to cope with the problem of expansion, increasing federal activity, and the dichotomy that Jones had noted beyond simply establishing an open door policy. To name but a few: it began to create special formats to deal with multi-campus institutions; it developed a new statement on the contours of a successful master's program; and, by 1970, it had decided that, if there was substantive change in an institution, the Commission might well require a review of the entire institution within two years. But, above all, it greatly expanded its consultant and advisory services, especially for the ever growing number of institutions seeking accreditation—a service designed to help them achieve the standards of excellence needed for ultimate accreditation and deal with the dilemma that Jones had underscored.

The CHE also realized that individual regional accrediting agencies needed to band together and work cooperatively to cope not only with the centralized power of Washington but also with the ever increasing number of specialized accrediting agencies that were springing up across the country with every new specialized educational program that emerged. The CHE thus took leadership in creating a federation of the regionals—the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions in Higher Education (FRACHE)—to represent common interests without infringing on the autonomy of each.
It was a move designed to give voluntary accreditation a stronger voice in Washington and, no less important, to reduce the mounting problem of overlapping and duplicating accrediting activities that plagued virtually every institution of higher education in the region. The same impetus was, a decade later, to lead Middle States to accept membership in the much more ambitious but similarly purposed COPA—the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation—when it was established in 1975.

It also became clear—to both the CHE and, as we will later see, to the Association at large—that at least some dimensions of the all-volunteer principle would have to be modified. Expansion of the accrediting universe meant expansion of the workload. Long gone were the days—which still existed as late as 1961—when Executive Secretary Jones would have to spend only a day or two each week in the office on Commission affairs or when two meetings per year of the full Commission would be sufficient to handle its business. Indeed, as the number of institutions seeking accreditation steadily increased, Commission members themselves complained that so much time had to be spent on accreditation that there was insufficient opportunity to consider larger educational issues. Symbolical of the change in operating procedures that expansion produced was the appointment, in 1966, of Robert Kirkwood as full-time Associate Executive Secretary. His immediate charge was to deal with and clear-up the logjam of some 75 institutions then in varying stages of candidacy. Soon too it was decided that the committee on evaluation reports would make the basic decisions on accepting the reports of evaluation teams and that the full Commission would only ratify its decisions. In short, there was greater professionalization within a volunteer organization. Kirkwood's appointment marked the beginnings of the creation of the still small but dedicated group of professionals who, from the mid-'sixties on, have conducted the daily business of the Commission, provided its widening support programs and consultative services, staffed its teams, prepared its reports, and made the visitations to campuses. Dorothy P. Heindel, the former Assistant Director, joined the staff that same year, 1966; H.R. Kells and Martha E. Church soon followed; and Howard L. Simmons, the first Black on the Commission staff, came aboard in 1974.

But despite the vast changes in the educational landscape in the 'sixties many of the Commission's concerns still remained with the older, established institutions who had long formed the core of Middle States. Though it had been agreed as early as 1957 that every effort should be made to tailor the re-evaluation process to suit the particular needs of individual institutions, a few expressed "sharp reservations as to the timing or even the desirability of the re-evaluation cycle." In response, in 1961 an entire session at the Skytop meeting of the Commission was devoted to discussion of ways in which the Commission might best serve those superior institutions for whom accreditation was not an issue. The goal was to develop new and "meaningful" forms of evaluation that would fulfill "most usefully the Association's requirement for periodic re-evaluation and re-accreditation, in the case of institutions of unquestioned academic stature."

As a result, beginning in the mid-'sixties, the Commission began to experiment with various forms of "atypical" evaluations which ranged from evaluations of special projects to case studies and even, for a while, to self-evaluations with minimal visitation and to re-affirmation without re-evaluation if the institutions "were prepared to submit evidence of their alertness in self-evaluation and institutional research." None, however, departed from the basic formula of self-evaluation and a visit, and each such evaluation had to be approved by a special committee of commissioners. The response, Taylor Jones noted, was "electric," and in 1965 no fewer than 27 institutions of all varieties performed some form of atypical evaluation.

There were, to be sure, immediate complaints that some institutions had chosen the case study as an easy way out, but the Commission had clearly demonstrated, once again, that accreditation procedures could be flexible and that re-accreditation did not necessarily mean that every institution had to fit itself into the same mold.

Moreover, the problem—how to make re-accreditation procedures meaningful to established institutions—was, and has remained, real. In the next decade, when both the Commission and institutions of higher education faced far different circumstances, the interest in experimentation—itself a product of the turbulent mood of the 'sixties—waned, and the staff itself assumed the role, which it still retains, of deciding if re-accreditation procedures should vary from the norm. But the movement had one clear and positive effect—it resulted in the final disappearance of any form of questionnaire being used by the Commission in its evaluative procedures.

In developing the atypical evaluations, Taylor Jones had worked out a new instrument which asked no questions at all but "merely suggests certain of the principal aspects of an institution with which realistic self-evaluation needs to be involved...." By 1971 the questionnaire was completely withdrawn, and Robert Kirkwood, who had succeeded Jones as the chief executive in 1970, had developed a narrative form of document for self-study and evaluation. The Commission on Higher Education was the first of the regionals to implement this reform.

"Like it or not," Robert Kirkwood advised the Commission in 1971, "accountability" is very much with us. With government at all levels now omnipresent in the educational scene, the role and function of accreditation take on new dimensions. No longer is it possible to think of accrediting as an activity of peers, by peers and for peers. If it is to remain the first two, then it must be more than only for the academic community—it must serve, in a greatly larger sense, the general public as well. Unless it does, without being hysterical or histrionic about it, others will take over, specifically state and/or federal government."

The Executive Director's warning was more than merely timely. Indeed, much of the history of the Commission in the 1970's can best be understood in terms of the impact of the concept of accountability on the CHE and its response to it. That the Commission was accountable to other groups and agencies was, of course, not an entirely new idea in the 'seventies. When Taylor Jones laid down his ten theses of accreditation at the moment of his retirement in 1970, he had included the statement: "The public has a right to know more than the accredited status of the institution." In his 1968 report on the health of the Association, its President, the Reverend Laurence J. McGinley, S.J., responding to outside criticism—in particular to William Selden's charge that voluntary accrediting agencies were hidebound and must realize that "their primary obligations are to society and not to their institutional members"—had proposed the addition of a secondary school principal and a layman to the Commission. Their function would be to serve "as channels of understanding toward the secondary schools and the general public."

But it was the ever expanding role of government in the 'seventies that gave real force to the idea of accountability. Government policies toward education had, as we have already seen, clearly begun to affect the Commission in the preceding decade. Nevertheless, as Robert Kirkwood later recalled, when he first joined the Commission staff in 1966, there was no specific agency of the federal government that was involved in accrediting activities and only one state, New York, had "a long-established involvement with higher education." But by the 'seventies what was to become the Division of Eligibility and Agency Evaluation (DEAE) in the Office of Education in Washington was flexing its now powerful muscles, while the Educational Facilities Act of 1968 had led to the creation of master planning agencies at the state level and, with that, the growth and strengthening of state departments of education.

Indeed, the Commission found itself being "accredited" by the Office of Education as part of the process whereby institutional eligibility for funding was determined. Although the relationship with the Office of Education went back to legislation passed in 1952, it had originally been informal—indeed, little more than listing of the CHE as an approved accrediting agency. But by the late 'sixties, representatives from the Eligibility and Agency Evaluation Division of the Office of Education were closely examining the Commission and its procedures, and, as a Commission document of the early 'seventies noted, "...the Commission is examined every four years to see if the Commission is functioning according to the criteria established by the U.S. Office of Education Eligibility and Agency Evaluation unit."

It was thus a rare Commission meeting in the 'seventies at which a major item on the agenda was not an extended discussion of how and in what ways the CHE should respond to some government action at the federal or state level. Government, the Executive Director observed, did much more than complicate the work of the Commission: "As state agencies exercise their authority to determine priorities and to allocate resources, what happens to institutional autonomy? Who will determine institutional objectives…and what will be the price to be paid for the Federal subsidies promised in the 1972 Congressional education act? These are not figments of idle imaginations but realities replete with ramifications for the accrediting process."

Simply to chronicle the governmental actions—real, threatened or imagined—which affected the Commission would require more pages than are allotted for the entirety of this centennial history. But it was clear that what the government demanded was accountability. In 1975, for example, John Proffitt of the Office of Education stated that accreditation and evaluation "were at a crossroads." Citing legislation then before Congress that would assign a prominent role in accreditation to the Federal government, Proffitt suggested that the Commissioner of Education would be authorized to audit the books of any institution that received student aid funds and to determine the financial capability of the institution. With the creation of the Department of Education in the Carter years the threat began to appear clear and present. The DEAE was reported as ready to demand that regional accrediting agencies like the Commission "guarantee the integrity of all the institutions they accredit"—a requirement, all the regionals felt, which would have saddled them with responsibilities beyond their capacity to accomplish (and, it might be added, with legal vulnerabilities never before even imagined).

Then, in 1979 the Carter administration proposed to sever the link between private, voluntary accreditation and eligibility for federal funding by making state departments of education responsible for deciding if an institution, private or public, should receive federal monies. Small wonder that the regionals began to complain that, unless checked, the new Department of Education threatened to move far beyond what its Congressional charter had mandated. Moreover, other Federal agencies appeared to be standing in the wings awaiting their cue to trespass on the terrain of voluntary accreditation. The Federal Trade Commission, motivated by evidence of fraud in some educational institutions, began to move in the direction of enforcing regulations presumably guaranteed to protect the student as consumer.

Even more pointed were the actions of state governments in the Middle States area. In state after state—Maryland, New Jersey and New York (to mention only the three most active and vocal)—newly strengthened state education offices began to raise sharp criticisms about the validity and rigor of the accreditations conducted by the Commission. State agencies—often themselves under political pressure and often, too, afflicted by the virus of empire building—made the charge that only they could guarantee institutional accountability.

There were fears that the Board of Higher Education in Maryland, operating under legislative mandate, would use its licensing powers to arrogate to itself the function of accreditation in Maryland. Relations with New Jersey, where the Department of Education established its own Commission on Accountability and a Newark paper predicted (erroneously) that the Garden State would become the first state to supplant voluntary private accreditation with public, were long at an impasse. Commissioner Hollander insisted that evaluation reports must be treated as public documents and maintained that the Commission was not frank in speaking to an institution's weaknesses. One New Jersey proposal for cooperation was flatly rejected by the Commission on the grounds that acceptance would "have resulted in the Commission's becoming an instrument of the New Jersey Board of Higher Education."

Litigation loomed as yet another serious issue. In the late 'sixties, the Commission and the Association, at great cost, had won the famous Marjorie Webster College case—a lawsuit brought by a Washington, D.C. proprietary school on the grounds that the refusal of the Commission to accept Marjorie Webster as a candidate for accreditation had done the institution irreparable harm. The Commission had founded its sustained and vigorous defense on its long standing principle that an institution run for profit could not fulfill its educational responsibilities. As Commission chairman Frank Piskor put it, the profit motive "limits the development of an institution of higher education." But although the Commission eventually won, an appeals court overruled the original decision of a U.S. district court in favor of Marjorie Webster, and the Supreme Court had refused to sustain another appeal—it was immediately clear that the victory had been inconclusive and, at best, Pyrrhic. For the clear implication of the legal decision was that the freedom of a private organization like the Commission to select or reject members was coming to an end, while the district court had maintained that "In view of the great reliance placed on accreditation by the public and government,...[the regional accrediting] associations must assume responsibility not only to their membership but also to society." William Kaplin, who studied the case in great detail, later wrote that "despite the college's ultimate loss on

appeal, the history of the case suggests that the standards by which higher education is governed may come under increasing scrutiny by the courts....” Then, in the 'seventies a Pennsylvania judge ruled that a college could not close its doors, in New York a court removed a board of trustees, and the Commission found itself taken to court by a group of private educational entrepreneurs when the CHE compelled a college to cancel its contractual off-campus program with them.

The Commission moved in many ways to respond to these threats and challenges from government, the courts and the public—to demonstrate, in short, its own accountability. It was well aware of criticism (spelled out in the FRACHE report [1970] prepared by Claude Puffer of the University of Buffalo) that the regionals were secretive and insensitive to the public interest. It began to take steps designed not only to secure greater public awareness of its activities but also to “assure[e] the consumers of our educational product that accreditation does represent a hallmark of excellence.” For example, the CHE began to publish an annual data summary of the institutions it accredited so that the public—guidance directors, potential students and their parents—could know more about their characteristics, and, beginning in 1976, the annual report of the Executive Director was regularly circulated to the member institutions of Middle States.

The list of new or expanded activities is lengthy: among them, Commission sponsorship of self-study workshops, non-evaluative case studies and workshops for evaluators; publication of statements on important trends in higher education; and the revision of key Commission documents (done, it should be added, only with and after full consultation with the membership) which were then put together in one published manual, *Policies and Procedures*. Thus, when the Arthur D. Little consulting firm examined the workings of the entire Association in 1973, it noted, in particular, the ways in which the activities of the Commission had been “expanded to encompass supportive activities to assist institutions as they change, develop, and cope with educational problems.” Additionally, the Commission placed new emphasis on the importance of measuring “outcomes” that is, the impact of the total collegiate educational experience upon students—and it accepted the proposition that there could be student participation in evaluations if the host institution so requested and the team chair agreed. By these, and many other actions, the Commission sought to demonstrate both its openness and its commitment to serving the welfare of the institutions it accredited.

It was in the ‘seventies that the democratization of the Commission finally became a reality. Public members—the first two of whom attended the June 1972 meeting as lay observers—were elected in 1973 to full membership on the Commission (whose overall size was increased to 24 as a result). Well before the decade was over, its ranks had come to include representatives from the full universe of the accredited Middle States institutions; there were now commissioners from former teachers’ colleges, from community colleges, from vocational and technical institutions as well as from the traditional colleges and universities that had long dominated the CHE. And by mid-decade it was clear from a special study made by Herbert Kells that evaluation teams—like the Commission itself—had become truly representative of the full constituency. While Kells found that faculty members were under and administrators over represented on teams, his study showed that women, Blacks and other minorities were now present in significant numbers to scotch any criticism that accreditation was merely the judgment of the establishment.

In addition, the presence of Howard Simmons on the staff opened new avenues of communication with Black colleges as well as Puerto Rican institutions. His diplomatic as well as linguistic skills enhanced the quality of the Commission’s dialogue with Puerto Rican educators and greatly helped the Commission in working its way through the numerous difficulties that arose from the dual role of the Puerto Rican Council of Higher Education which functioned, on the one hand, as the licensing and accrediting agency for all educational institutions on the island and, on the other, as the Board of Trustees for the University of Puerto Rico.

Regionally there were a series of seemingly endless meetings with state officials to try to develop ways in which the Commission could establish not simply a modus vivendi but a genuine working relationship. No less important, the Commission began to sponsor sub-regional meetings with the presidents and principal administrators of the institutions of higher education in the area. Though called in part to make certain that these men and women, many of whom were new to their jobs,

became more familiar with the purposes and procedures of the Commission (in one two-year period, for example, one third of the Middle States institutions had a change in their presidencies), these gatherings quickly proved a useful forum for the exchange of information on issues of mutual concern, ranging from Commission procedures and government intervention to the pending fiscal and enrollment crises.

By decade's end there were clear signs of progress. Eventually though not without periods of mistrust and tension—successful working relations were in place with several states. The agreement with Maryland, whereby a state representative accompanied a CHE team and participated in the evaluation (though not in writing the report) was looked upon as a model that other states might wish to emulate. Of even greater significance was the fact that the institutions of Middle States, private as well as public, began to rally strongly behind the principle of voluntary self-accreditation against government certification at any level. Indeed, in the face of the Carter administration's professed intention to sever eligibility for funding from accreditation there emerged what one commissioner described as "a grand display of harmony among heads of private and public institutions in the Middle State area and support for the Commission."

But other forces—inflation, finances, and the threat of demographically determined declines in enrollment—were to have more effect on higher education, and ultimately on the CHE, than the claims of government. "It was a rare evaluation," Robert Kirkwood wrote in his annual report for 1977-78, "which did not comment on the Siamese twinship of enrollment and finances and their crucial bearing on institutional well-being." Many regional institutions, in response, began to adopt what can only be described as survival strategies and, in the process, often changed their character. They added continuing education programs, multiplied their off-campus educational endeavors, and, above all, instituted career-oriented courses which presumably met student demands for "relevance." Most notable were the proliferation of courses and programs, at both the graduate and undergraduate level, in business and business administration. Kirkwood was scarcely exaggerating when, in another annual report, he commented, "More than a few liberal arts colleges are that in name only, and the humanities are increasingly relegated to 'service' departments where once they were the heart of the curriculum."

How did the Commission respond? Off-campus programs all too often raised the question of who, within the parent institution was actually in charge, responsible for the maintenance of standards, and the setting of educational policy. There were serious questions about both the welfare and qualifications of the increasing number of part-time and adjunct faculty who increasingly staffed such programs. Some practices—for example, the decision of a few hard-pressed institutions to contract out the operation of an off-campus program to a private entrepreneur, with the institution, in essence, being paid for the use of its name and accreditation—genuinely raised issues of institutional integrity let alone the quality of the programs being offered. Moreover, it was obvious that the abuses that arose from these developments fueled the desire of government agencies, acting in the name of accountability, to act if the regionals did not. The Commission, therefore, took leadership among the regionals in instituting a special study of off-campus activities. It also began to require institutions to notify the Commission, ninety days in advance, of plans to initiate off-campus activities and to provide reports on them within three years.

Additionally, evaluation teams began to pay more attention to the financial health of institutions, a problem which had long created difficulties for the Commission and its evaluation teams. Even as late as the mid-'seventies Harry Porter (who served briefly as Executive Director when Robert Kirkwood went off to Washington for a few years) could write, "The relationship of accreditation and institutional financial stability has always been a matter of considerable puzzlement for the Commission. At what point does an institution's financial weakness seriously undermine its educational effectiveness? Is it the Commission's responsibility only to measure this effectiveness, or should it also feel a responsibility for keeping the institution afloat?" But at the same time Porter wrote this he had secured the advice of several experts in the financial analysis of institutions of higher education and also declared that the Commission and evaluating teams would clearly need to get "more comprehensive financial information from member institutions in the course of accreditation work." Thereafter, while the CHE realized that, in a three-day visit, no evaluation team could conduct the kind of definitive financial

review that state agencies wanted, nonetheless evaluation teams began to focus on financial questions and every effort was made to include on each team an evaluator with real expertise in institutional finance.

Given the increasing prospect of litigation, the Commission wrestled with the issue of due process, frequently considered the question of whether or not adverse decisions should remain confidential, and convened a panel of legal scholars to advise on the troubled matter of institutional closure. Eventually the CHE developed its own pioneering statement on ways in which an institution, battered by declining enrollments and attendant financial woes, could prepare itself for closure in ways that would not only protect it from the courts but would also protect the rights of students and faculty. No less complex was the question of collective bargaining on campus. Unionization was an issue of immediacy since, even in the early 'seventies, it already involved a quarter of the institutions in the Middle States area, far more than in any other region. There was much questioning of its possible impact. "Is ossification the inevitable result of contractual definition of teaching loads.... Or does the potential of collective bargaining hold promise of greater fulfillment of the partnership between faculty and administration...?" Eventually the Commission worked out a statement that the CHE took no stand on the decision of an institution to enter into a collective bargaining agreement nor did it intend to get involved in considering the merits of contracts but that it did and would concern itself with the effect of collective bargaining upon the quality and effectiveness of instructional programs. But, as it turned out, unionization did not have the impact originally anticipated. As Robert Kirkwood noted in 1977, most collective bargaining on campus concerned "bread and butter" issues and not "substantive academic issues."

Without question the most positive of the Commission's responses to the challenges of the 'seventies was its decision in 1973 that every institution would be required to submit a "progress report" five years after its re-evaluation and re-accreditation. The Commission recognized that the rate of accelerated change in higher education was so great and so extensive that the ten year cycle no longer retained its original validity. Given what was happening in the academic world, ten years was too long to be out of touch with an institution. Moreover, government agencies, with their special concerns about accountability, operated on a shorter cycle. Thus began the Periodic Review Report (PRR)—the first of which were due in 1978. Institutions were called upon to spell out the ways in which they had responded to their most recent re-accreditation and to note what progress they had made in dealing with the matters raised in that evolution. The PRR's proved—indeed, proved from the start beneficial to both the CHE and to the institutions that prepared them. In addition, the Commission greatly increased the number of follow-up visits and reports, particularly when a visiting team reported problems that, it was believed, should not be allowed to linger until the PRR was due. In consequence of these expanded activities and procedural changes the Commission, by the end of the decade, was in touch every year with half of the institutions in the region.

The most ironic change, however, was the Commission's complete reversal of its policy toward proprietary institutions within just a few short years after it had fought a protracted court battle to keep Marjorie Webster College outside the gates. However, under pressure from many sides and with the fear that the Webster decision might not stick, the Commission—to put it simply—quietly struck its tents and abandoned the field of battle. Its decision, ratified by the membership, was to recognize proprietaries as eligible for candidacy and eventual accreditation provided that their boards of trustees were representative of the public interest and that they were willing to make full disclosure of their financial books. This, as it turned out, was something most proprietary institutions were unwilling to do. Thus, while accreditation of such institutions did begin in the mid-seventies, their number remained small and the impact far less than anticipated.

Yet the decision to accept proprietaries combined with the acceptance of such unorthodox programs as the New York State External Degree program (the so-called "University without walls") underlined not only the dramatic extension of the universe of accreditation in the 1970's but also how the scope and nature of accreditation had changed. As Robert Kirkwood later observed, "Accreditation has meaning different from that of twenty years ago.... It is much more visible, and different publics use accreditation in different ways.... Federal and state agencies, various organizations and foundations look to accreditation for assurances not sought even ten years ago."

Early in 1980, Executive Director Kirkwood was asked by the president of the Association to predict the issues that would predominate in accreditation in the 'eighties. Kirkwood's list—relations with state and federal governments, consumer protection, COPA, "turf' protection (that is, the sensitivity of institutions towards permitting others to conduct programs in "their" territory), institutional closures, intercollegiate athletics—followed, with a few exceptions, from the agenda of the 'seventies and, in addition, proved to be an accurate forecast.

The 'eighties, unmarked by the turmoil and unrest of the two preceding decades, have so far proved to be conservative—and the new conservatism has already had its effect on the Commission. The Reagan revolution with its deregulation and intended reduction of the Federal presence in American life—which included, at least initially, thoughts of abolishing the Department of Education—meant, quite simply, that the spectre of Washington taking over accreditation vanished almost overnight. Minutes of Commission meetings, which had previously contained long and critical sections on relations with Federal agencies, now included only brief entries best summarized as "nothing to report" or short notations about good relations with the DEAE. Somewhat ironically one of the few actions by the Commission that concerned the Federal government was a rare departure from its norms: a resolution with political intent. Concerned by the prospect of deep cuts in Federal programs of student aid, the Commission in 1982 issued a statement—sent to all its constituents as well as to the White House and Congress—which asked the Federal Government to recognize and support the priority of education.

But the Commission also took positive steps of its own to improve relations with the states and their boards of education. It clearly recognized that the states had legitimate concerns but at the same time wanted to make certain not to enter any agreements that "could co-opt the activities of the CHE." Working with a special committee of leading college presidents and administrative officers, the Commission developed a formal statement on relations with state agencies. The eventual result, "A Statement on Working Relations Between State Agencies and the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of College and Schools" was approved in 1984 after consultation with the educational authorities in each state as well as in Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. It clearly recognized those areas in which the state had legitimate responsibilities but it also upheld the principle that accreditation should be independent and voluntary and "that the primary responsibility for promoting quality in higher education should be placed on the individual institution." This document has since proved acceptable to state educational authorities—New Jersey finally accepted the confidentiality provisions which had long been an issue—and, as the 'eighties progressed, the record has remained one of state and Commission cooperation in accreditation. Of late, however, attempts by some states to institute mandatory, quantitative outcomes and competency testing has raised the issue of excessive state interference in the making of educational policy.

Favorable voices now began to be heard. Ernest Boyer in his 1986 book, *College: The American Undergraduate Experience* was positive in his assessment of voluntary accreditation as by far the best means of promoting quality in education. Clearly it was not the 'sixties or seventies!

COPA, from which so much had been expected when it was established in 1975, had long been an object of Commission concern and frustration—for its dues structure and its apparent inability to stem the proliferation of specialized accrediting agencies. But at the lowest common denominator every one also recognized that COPA was the classic example of an organization which, if it didn't exist, would have to be created. But it, too, underwent reorganization, and by this 100th MSA anniversary it is being viewed as the helpful and increasingly effective national arm of voluntary accreditation serving the Middle States interest in Washington.

There was continued concern that many institutions still believed that they could circumvent projected enrollment decreases by adding new degree programs and expanding off-campus and continuing education activities, let alone proliferating courses in the area of business education and computer science. New concerns—related to the Commission's interest in protecting the student as consumer—were possibly deceptive advertising used to attract students and, above all, the notable increase in the reliance on part-time and adjunct faculty, all too often employed for reasons of economy. On the latter, while the Commission took no specific stand on the issue of full- versus part-time faculty,

its position paper spelled out the problems—for example, in student advising and faculty morale—when there was excessive reliance on part-time faculty who were in, but not of, an institution. And the Commission began to consider a new regulation that, if an institution began a new degree program, whether at the advanced or associate level, it should expect a complete re-evaluation of its accreditation within two years. Additionally, though the Commission had long pointed to the crucial role of trustees, its reports in the 'eighties increasingly stressed the significance of active participation by trustees not only in self-evaluation and accreditation but in the preservation of the health of institutions. In this it exercised a leadership position among the regionals.

Many issues of the 'eighties were, of course, but continuations of long standing concerns. The Commission continued to wrestle with the old dilemma of establishing an appropriate balance between its obligations to the public and to the institutions it served—in this case, with the always controversial question of how "negative" actions should be handled. There was much discussion of the advisability of following the lead of other regionals and creating a special category of "probation" that, upon specific and appropriate inquiry, might be publicly disclosed. But, in the last analysis, the long-established policy was retained: an evaluation remained the property of the institution to which it was submitted and was to be disclosed, in its totality, only at and by the discretion of the institution. Disclosure by the CHE of an extreme negative action such as denial of accreditation could occur only after all appeals processes had been exhausted. Anything else, it was believed, would prove too damaging to an institution and harm the Commission's relations with its constituents.

Similarly, the old problem of scandals in collegiate athletics once again became an important item on the Commission agenda. This, of course, was an issue on which the Commission had frequently—and, unfortunately, to little effect—spoken. It had first issued statements in the 1930s and again in the 1950s in the wake of scandals in basketball. While evaluation teams did and continue to look at an institution's athletic program, the Commission had in essence withdrawn, somewhat battered, from the field and left enforcement issues to the NCAA. But in the mid-'eighties, with mounting nationwide evidence of athletic programs which violated institutional integrity, it updated and reissued its statement on good practices in athletic programs. And as the hundredth year began it was increasingly clear that Middle States, along with the other regionals, was once again to try to come to grips with the role of athletics on Middle States campuses. It remains to be seen if the prospects for successful action are any better than they had been in previous decades.

But the 'eighties also brought encouraging developments, and many of the dire forecasts simply did not materialize. Evaluation teams began to report that many institutions, through increased planning and self-study, were getting a firmer grip on their financial problems. The academic love affair with the MBA began to cool, and on many campuses the rush to pre-professional training was overtaken by a measurable increase in interest in the liberal arts. And, as of 1987, the long anticipated decline in enrollments had yet to make its predicted impact. As Robert Kirkwood's 1987 report notes, "...by and large, the demographic impact is yet to be fully felt in the Middle States region." Yet the changed temper of the times also showed itself. Evaluation team after evaluation team reported that the commitment to Blacks, to women, and to minorities in general had waned if not disappeared on many campuses. "Affirmative inaction" was the not exaggerated term that Associate Director Minna Weinstein used in one of her annual reports. And, ironically, a Commission which in the 1960s had tried to develop a statement on how the disruption of an institution by student activism might affect its accreditation found itself revising that document in the light of disruption caused by a strike or financial exigency.

As the Middle States Association completes its hundredth year—and the Commission on Higher Education its sixty-eighth—how well has the Commission fulfilled its chartered obligations not only to accredit but also to improve the quality of education in the region, to serve its constituents, and to preserve the integrity of the educational process?

A statistical demonstration is easy. In 1962 the CHE dealt with a total of 295 institutions. It conducted 35 evaluations (of which only four were initial accreditations) and 47 follow-up activities. A total of 306 individuals participated in these evaluations, of whom only 54 were women and only two served as chairs. As noted, no Blacks or minorities were involved.

Twenty-five years later the Commission's universe included 490 accredited institutions and 11 candidates. To its 51 evaluations were added 4 Program/Service Reviews and 27 small team/fact finding visits. Follow-up activities, visits and reports—a category which had expanded exponentially since the 'seventies—had reached the staggering total of 134. Additionally, the five-year Periodic Review Reports—a category which did not exist until 1973—amounted to 62. These raw statistics alone indicate not only that the Commission, in any given year, was in touch in one way or another with over half of its constituency but also that it was making an ever—expanding effort to keep abreast of the many forces creating rapid educational change in the region. Additionally, in 1987 the total number of evaluators—plus chairs, special team members, associates, and readers of PRR's—was well over 500. Women now comprised 44% of the evaluators and 28% of the team chairs, while Blacks and other minorities furnished 22% of the former and 30% of the latter. Truly, democratization and diversity had been accomplished.

Since the 1950's, with the exception of a few years in the early 'seventies when Harry W. Porter and Dorothy G. Petersen served as the Commission executive, the Commission has been in the hands of only two full-time chief executives—Taylor Jones and Robert Kirkwood (whose own retirement is announced for 1988). These two men, aided by a small staff of equally dedicated professionals, have made the visits to institutions, written the reports, represented the Commission to its constituents, and conducted the daily business of accreditation. They have set both the tone and the agenda—often by detecting trends in higher education and, as for example with Robert Kirkwood's recent paper on part-time faculty, bringing them to the attention of all member institutions.

But the CHE is also composed of a constantly changing group of from 18 to 24 Commissioners each serving no more than two three-year terms, men and women now fully representative of the wide variety of two and four-year institutions within the Middle States region. Each voluntarily contributes at least ten to twelve full days a year to Commission business simply because he or she believes in the validity of its mission. The distinguished group of educators who have chaired the Commission in the past two and a half decades—Frank P. Piskor, Albert E. Meder Jr., Elizabeth McCormack, R. Lee Hornbake, Milton G. Bassin, Bruce Dearing, Rose Charming, Edward V. Ellis—have contributed far more. No one of these individuals would interpret the history of the Commission, or its strengths and shortcomings, in the same way, but all have shared a common commitment to the principle—indeed, the categorical imperative—of voluntary accreditation and the need to maintain standards of excellence no matter how differently each would define it.

Thus, although it is difficult to write the collective history of such a disparate group, let alone to assess the work of the Commission, a few conclusions seem evident. The Commission led the regionals in such areas as the change from quantitative to qualitative evaluations, insistence upon trustee involvement, studies of off-campus activities and programs at military bases, the creation of national groupings like FRACHE, and the establishment of categories of candidacy for accreditation. Its willingness to involve women in accreditation went well beyond tokenism. The Commission's record with respect to Blacks and minorities was no better than other social organizations, but, as suggested by its hesitation to link accreditation with the integration of academic institutions, it certainly cannot claim to have exercised a leadership role. Likewise, some of the reforms of the 'sixties and 'seventies—the opening of the accrediting doors to proprietaries and vocational and technical institutions—probably owes more to exogenous forces than to Commission prescience. The engine of change was the linking of federal grants to accreditation, mounting governmental and public demands for accountability, and the rise of consumerism. Also, the fact that the Commission's difficulties with government abated in the 'eighties owes much to the change in national mood which accompanied the Reagan era. Moreover, in the 'seventies, once the interventionist intent of federal and state agencies became apparent, both private and public institutions of higher education rallied behind the Commission's banner. Even critics of the Commission recognized that the only viable alternative was some form of government supervision and surveillance. Virtually no American educator has ever wished to march behind that flag.

The actions of the Commission cannot—indeed, should not—please everyone. Some will continue to see the Commission as too lax and secretive; others will regard it as overly prescriptive. Established institutions will always be tempted to question what the Commission has to offer, regard re-accreditation as something done primarily for the Commission, and fail to see how beneficial the self-study process can be to their own educational welfare. And—as the ongoing debates over the disclosure of adverse actions have clearly demonstrated—there will always be debate. For the Commission, as Taylor Jones pointed out over two decades ago, always confronts a dichotomy; on the one hand its task is to monitor, to uphold standards, to serve the public; on the other, its job is to serve its constituent institutions, to help them achieve excellence, to enable them to survive. These two purposes are not always easy to reconcile.

Yet the Commission has done well in the last twenty-five years. It has been flexible and adaptive in its accrediting procedures. In the interest of improving the quality of education in the region, it has greatly expanded the range of services it provides to member institutions. Its main focus has been to insist upon the integrity of the educational process in a wide variety of changing institutions of higher education with widely divergent missions.

The strength of American education—indeed the strength of America itself—has always been its pluralism and its diversity. The great virtue of the Commission, most notably in the past quarter century, has been its recognition and support of that pluralism, that diversity. Moreover, as Alexis de Tocqueville observed more than a century and a half ago, a central characteristic—and abiding strength—of American society has been the supportive and nurturing role of independent and voluntary organizations and associations in preserving that society. What de Tocqueville found true of American society in the 1830s retains its validity today. The principle of voluntarism and independence—as epitomized by the work of the Commission in attempting to maintain the integrity of the educational process—speaks directly to the strength of American higher education. The late Ewald Nyquist, one of the true educational statesmen of our time, put it well in one of the last speeches he gave: "...voluntary accreditation is essential to the conduct of higher education and to preserving the educational community's prerogative of policing itself and of exercising the responsibilities that go with it. Its very essence is maintaining freedom of institutions while keeping them socially responsible. Accrediting is a public responsibility and an accountability for stewardship of a public trust."

The Commission on Secondary Schools[5]

In 1920, at a meeting held at Johns Hopkins University, the Middle States Association established a Commission on Secondary Schools and charged it with the responsibility of "developing and maintaining a list of accredited schools." Although the Commission was not formally established until 1920, a previously appointed working committee of the Association already had developed a set of bylaws relative to secondary schools and by 1892 had recommended a number of schools for membership in the Association. Thus, the newly formed Commission began business with a nucleus of some fifty schools.

Of particular interest are the bylaws written in 1892, for they established the basic operational philosophy of the Commission which has been respected to the present time:

1 . Secondary Schools will enter into evaluation and accreditation strictly on a voluntary basis.

2. The work related to evaluation and accreditation will be accomplished on a voluntary and unpaid basis.

3. All schools seeking accreditation must meet the educational standards established by the Commission.

One of the most persistent and recurring matters that has occupied the Commission's attention over the years has been the establishment and maintenance of a set of educational standards for use in school accreditation. The recorded minutes of Commission meetings indicate that hardly a five-year period passed in the life of the Commission that a committee has not been appointed to review and update the standards currently in force. Changing times, changing social needs, changing attitudes of Commission personnel, and challenging questions relative to developing a proper philosophy of secondary education and identifying the needs of secondary school students—all of these, and more, have kept the Standards in a state of constant review. Despite the fact that this effort by the Commission has demanded much time and effort, it has, nevertheless, resulted in keeping the Secondary School Standards viable and up-to-date with current educational philosophy.

The first Commission was composed of five members: a headmaster, a principal, a college professor, a college dean, and a representative of a State Department of Education. In subsequent years the number of Commissioners has varied from five to twenty-one. Currently, the number is eighteen. The increased size of the Commission over the years arose from the desire of its members to have broader input into its deliberations. Thus the present Commission is not only geographically representative but also representative of the wide variety of schools in the MSA membership—public, church related, private, urban, suburban, rural, Caribbean, overseas. In recent years members have been added to represent the public-at-large.

In the early years, much of the field work of the Commission on Secondary Schools was performed by State Committees. It was the responsibility of these committees to establish the visiting committees which, in turn, inspected the schools that were candidates for MSA membership. The schools were measured against the current CSS standards by the State Committees, which then made recommendations to the Commission about accreditation. The Commission, in its turn, took appropriate action by adding the names of the schools to the accredited list or denying membership as the case might warrant. With some modifications, this method of evaluation and accreditation was employed until 1940.

5 This section was written by William T. Bean, a member of the Commission on Secondary Schools and of the MSA Board of Trustees from 1965 to 1968. He served as a member of the CSS professional staff from 1969 to 1975.

Although the work of the Commission progressed during this period, many Commissioners believed that a more objective approach to the evaluation process would produce a more reliable and useful report about the quality of education in a given school. This was, in fact, a matter of concern to all the regional accrediting agencies and not simply to the CSS. To solve the problem, the National Study of School Evaluation was organized in the early 1930s. The new organization was composed of representatives from the several regional accrediting agencies, and its primary purpose was to produce an objective instrument that could be used by all secondary schools for evaluating their programs of instruction. The Commission on Secondary Schools strongly supported this effort and contributed much to its eventual success. In 1940 the NSSE Evaluative Criteria was published, and subsequent updated editions appeared in 1950, 1960, 1969, and 1976. Each new edition reflected changes and improvements which were the result of reports from educators in the field who had employed the criteria in evaluations.

Now, for the first time, the CSS had at hand an invaluable tool for use in the evaluating process; as a result, changes in both philosophy and practice came in rapid succession. First, before the Commission formally adopted these materials, it conducted a pilot study using the Evaluative Criteria in a number of school evaluations. The results of questionnaires, both from visiting committees and from teachers and administrators who used these materials, were overwhelmingly positive. Consequently in 1945, the CSS formally adopted the Evaluative Criteria for use in the Middle States area. It was also in that year that the Commission formulated and adopted the most definitive of school standards. In addition, the ten-year cycle of accreditation with periodic school reporting came into being at this time.

In 1944, the appointment and supervision of visiting committees passed from the hands of the State Committees to the professional office staff of the CSS. After considerable study, the Commission established its basic policies with regard to the formulation of visiting committees, and these have remained constant ever since:

1. The number of visiting committee personnel will vary in size from nine to twenty-seven depending on the size of the school being evaluated.

2. Specialists and generalists will be appointed following the divisions of the criteria and the offerings of the school.

3. Half of each team of visitors will be experienced evaluators.

4. All general types of schools will be represented on the visiting committee but the nature of the school being studied will be reflected more heavily.

5. Both men and women will be represented on the visiting committees. Minority representation will also be respected.

6. No one who has had an association with the school will be included in the membership of the visiting committee.

7. The proposed membership of the visiting committee will be submitted to the principal or headmaster for approval.

After World War II national attention shifted from war-related issues back to the problems of civilian life. In the late 1940s many principals and headmasters discovered the Evaluative Criteria for the first time and realized that it was an ideal instrument for studying the scope and quality of their school's offerings as well as for planning the growth and improvement of their programs of study. Under the Evaluative Criteria, the foremost requirement was to develop a school philosophy and to measure the effectiveness of the school's program of studies against that philosophy. Up until that time it was a rare school, indeed, that had a written philosophy to chart the growth of its programs. As a result of this new requirement, many faculties were asked to do a type of thinking and analysis to which they were unaccustomed but completion of this task usually produced new and exciting results.

The new approach to evaluation and accreditation and the sharply increased interest of secondary school educators in the new instruments for improving educational programs required the Commission to reorganize its ways of doing business. Consequently, 1946 became a year of change with emphasis on the following:

1. The standards for accreditation were reviewed, sharpened, and clarified.

2. The professional and non-professional staffs were enlarged and reorganized.

3. The Commission inaugurated a study to define the scope and character of its responsibilities relative to servicing the needs of member schools which were required to make mandated improvements in their programs of study.

The review of CSS standards was required because of confusion on the part of some educators about possible conflicts between a school's philosophy and the CSS standards for accreditation and membership in the Middle States Association. The troublesome question was: which prevails in matters of accreditation—the adequacy of a school's program when measured against its philosophy, or the adequacy of the program when measured against CSS standards? With the publication of new CSS standards and clarification of the correlation of a school's philosophy to these standards, the problem was solved.

The adoption of the Evaluative Criteria for evaluation and accreditation and the decision of the Commission to move the appointment and supervision of visiting committees into the CSS office thrust a veritable mountain of work upon the professional and non-professional staffs. For a period of time they were literally swamped with correspondence, the creation and servicing of visiting committees, the handling of the Commission's financial affairs, and the reading and analysis of evaluation reports. It was obvious that immediate improvements were required. Hence, the office staff was enlarged, responsibilities identified and assigned, and more spacious quarters secured.

During the late 1940s the Commission found itself embracing a new philosophy. This philosophy was not created in advance but evolved through changes in the way that the Commission handled school evaluation and accreditation. For many years the CSS had continued to follow its original charge of "developing and maintaining a list of accredited schools." While this did not spell out what an accredited school should be, there was a tacit understanding that an accredited school should be outstanding in preparing students for entrance into colleges and universities. Thus, for many years, the accrediting philosophy of the CSS was weighted heavily toward the adequacy and quality of a school's academic program of instruction. The adoption of the Evaluative Criteria, however, compelled the Commission to reconsider the characteristics of a "good school" relative to accreditation.

The new Criteria, as previously noted, required a school being evaluated to develop its own philosophy and, in addition, to describe the nature of its student body and identify the needs of those students. Further, the evaluations at the end of each of the subsections of the Criteria called for appraisals not only of a school's philosophy but also of how well it was meeting the needs of its students. Thus, a "good school"—one worthy of accreditation—became one that served the needs of all its students, both academic and non-academic.

Accreditation now became broad-based as the new Criteria readily identified the strengths and weaknesses of secondary schools. The measurement of a school's strengths against the refined standards of the Commission determined accreditation. The weaknesses became the basis for recommended improvements in a school's programs, with subsequent CSS monitoring and periodic reporting of actions taken to improve weaknesses. In this manner the Commission became a respected moving force in the improvement of secondary school programs.

During the late 1940s, while the first edition of the Evaluative Criteria was still in use, the Commission staff accumulated a lengthy list of observations, criticisms and recommendations for improving these materials. Eventually these items were forwarded to the National Secondary School Evaluation when the 1950 edition of the Criteria was being prepared. The strongest objection to the Criteria came from leaders of religious schools, who noted the absence of a subsection for measuring the effectiveness of religious instruction in their schools. At the urging of this group, the CSS organized a representative

committee to review the problem and make recommendations. The result was the publication and distribution by the CSS of an evaluation tool suitable for measuring the outcomes of programs of religious instruction. In addition, these criteria were used by the NSSE, along with materials from other sources, to create its own subsection on religion which became an integral part of later editions of the Evaluative Criteria.

In the late 1940s, the Commission began to receive a number of inquiries from American Overseas Schools about the possibility of evaluation and accreditation by the Middle States Association. Accreditation was (and, indeed, still is) a very important status for these schools to obtain. They were scattered around the world, serving the educational needs of American students whose parents were employees of the U.S. government or American businesses. Separated from the American scene, these schools found it difficult to keep abreast of American educational trends. Moreover, they were deeply concerned that their students, upon returning to the United States, should be prepared to move into American high schools without loss of grade placement. In addition, they wanted American colleges and universities to have convincing evidence of the instructional quality of their schools when students applied for admission. This was a new problem for the Commission, and it agonized for no little time over the advisability of accrediting overseas schools. Commissioners were deeply concerned about the high cost of assembling a visiting committee overseas and about how, once a school had been evaluated and accredited, the Commission could adequately serve the educational needs of a school so distant. However, after many discussions, the Commission decided to move into the field of evaluating and accrediting American overseas schools.

The first such school was admitted to MSA membership in 1958, but almost immediately the Commission became aware of an unexpected problem which demanded immediate attention; namely, the fact that other regional accrediting agencies also had interests in accrediting overseas schools. The Commission did not want to find itself competing with these agencies for memberships. The International School Foundation arranged a meeting of representatives of the various agencies to explore the issue. At that time, the North Central Association was evaluating and accrediting the American Overseas Armed Forces Schools on military bases scattered throughout the world, while the Southern Association had begun working with schools in Central and South America. None of the other agencies at that moment indicated any serious interest in servicing overseas schools. Shortly, however, the Western Association requested that it provide accreditation services for schools in the Far East. By this time the MSA had accredited several schools in the Far East, but it decided that the Western Association was in a better position to service this region. Hence, with the approval of the Far Eastern schools in question, their memberships were transferred to the Western Association. This left the Commission on Secondary Schools of Middle States to service the American overseas schools in the Caribbean, Europe, Africa and the Near East.

The work of the Commission on Secondary Schools was facilitated by the cooperation of the Office of Overseas Schools in the United States Department of State. This office, charged with supervising American overseas schools and distributing certain federal funds for their support, was deeply interested in the development of strong educational programs in these schools. Consequently, the Office of Overseas Schools has been strongly supportive of the evaluation and accreditation process of the CSS. In the last decade and a half there has been a moderate but steady increase in the number of American overseas schools accredited by the CSS. However, the cost of these evaluations to the overseas schools has continued to be a matter of concern frequently discussed by the Commission. To help with this problem, the Commission has cooperated with the European Council of International Schools which has been accrediting overseas schools in Europe for some time and eventually agreed to joint evaluation and accreditation with the Council. The Commission also approved, particularly for small overseas schools, the use of the ECIS instrument of evaluation for accreditation. To provide further help in the matter of expenses, the Commission also experimented in 1978 with the use of six-person evaluation teams, a practice which has proven to be quite successful.

By the 1960s a sizable number of high schools in the Middle States area had been accredited, and, because the experience had generally been very rewarding to most school districts, a number of junior High Schools began to request evaluation and accreditation. However, since no suitable criteria were available for junior high schools or for the emerging middle schools, the CSS declined these requests.

It did, however, agree to help wherever possible in any self-study that such schools might undertake. In the meantime the NSSE had been developing an *Evaluative Criteria for the junior High/Middle School*, which it published in 1970. The Commission on Secondary Schools was, of course, well aware that this development was under way and had continued to discuss the advisability of embarking upon a program of evaluation and accreditation for junior high and middle schools. Finally, with the publication of the NSSE materials, and after conducting a highly successful pilot program of its own, the Commission made the commitment to extend its evaluation and accreditation services to these schools. To conduct the new program, the Commission added an additional professional person to its staff and established its own standards for accrediting junior high and middle schools. In 1974, the first of them were admitted to membership, and the program has continued to be successful ever since.

In the 1960s certain organizations requested permission to use their own criteria for evaluations instead of the Evaluative Criteria employed by the CSS. Each request was given serious consideration, and the materials in question studied thoroughly. However, the Commission decided, in each case, that the criteria submitted did not adequately evaluate programs and declined to accept them for use in the MSA region.

Then, in 1976, the NSSE produced the Narrative Edition of its Evaluative Criteria and, after studying it carefully, the members of the Commission decided that a number of small schools might prefer to use the NSSE approach to evaluation rather than the more objective, more extensive Evaluative Criteria. Although the Commission approved the Narrative Edition in 1978, it has been used only sparingly in subsequent evaluations.

In 1977 the Commission on Secondary Schools entered into a cooperative working agreement with the National Accreditation Council (for agencies servicing the blind and visually handicapped) to combine the basically similar steps of self-study and on-site visitation used by both accrediting agencies. In 1978, in cooperation with the new Assembly of Elementary Schools that the MSA had recently established, two K-12 schools were evaluated and accredited using a new approach that the CSS and the Assembly had jointly developed. Shortly thereafter the NSSE introduced its own criteria for evaluating K-12 schools. In 1979, at the request of several independent schools, the Commission approved the use of the New England Manual in evaluations. However, though a number of such models have been approved to accommodate the needs of certain types of schools, the use of such tools has remained infrequent.

In the early years the office of the Commission was located, as someone once observed, “wherever the Chairman hangs his hat.” Since the early chairmen were also professors of education at the University of Pennsylvania, the headquarters of the CSS was on the Penn campus, wherever space was available. This arrangement was a professional courtesy; the Commission paid no rent, and there were no charges for services. However, in the early 1950s, with the need for additional space required by an expanded staff and with none available at the University, the office of the CSS was moved to the Wilfred Building, on 33rd Street, still not far from the Penn campus.

In the 1970s the need for more office space rose again, in part because of the increased number of schools requiring evaluation services and the larger staff needed to serve them. Of greater significance was the decision of the Board of Trustees to combine all the MSA offices under one roof in Philadelphia. This resulted in a move, in 1976, to a new location at the nearby Science Center on Market Street. Moreover, the Assembly of Elementary Schools—an entirely new Middle States program for the evaluation and accreditation of elementary schools—came into being soon thereafter. The Assembly required its own staff of professional and non-professional people, once again creating the demand for additional office space. In consequence, the MSA ultimately purchased a new condominium in the Science Center where the CSS offices are now located.

To keep abreast of the best organizational practices developed in recent years, the MSA has inaugurated a program to upgrade both its professional and non-professional staffs. Funds have been made available for use by the support staff to pursue advanced training, while a sabbatical leave program has been made available to the professional staff. The Association had also made a serious effort to take advantage of new technologies and has purchased and installed many new pieces of office equipment in the Association headquarters.

Two adjustments in the working conditions of the staff have been made in recent years which have greatly improved the overall operation of the CSS. In 1978 the professional staff was realigned, with each professional assigned to serve all of the evaluation and accreditation needs of schools in a designated geographical district. This new arrangement has worked well. Schools are now well aware of the identity of their CSS representative, while repeated contacts between that representative and school administrators have strengthened the relationship of the CSS office with its constituency. In addition, the professionals have developed a warm relationship with representatives of various State Departments of Public instruction, and they are invited to attend State meetings of high school administrators.

A second change in the working conditions of the professional staff has been to transfer the reading and evaluation of Progress Reports to the State Advisory Committees. The results have been two-fold: first, the Commission has found that the reports are read and evaluated very efficiently under the new system, and, second, the transfer of this assignment out of the CSS office has meant that approximately thirty percent of each professional's time is now available for other Commission work. The professional staff, for the first time, is no longer desk bound. The thirty percent of salvaged time is invested in travel to schools throughout the area. Thus the services of the Commission have become both more efficient and personal.

The new assignment given the State Advisory Committees only underscores the important role they have always played in the work of the Commission. In addition to reading and evaluating Progress Reports, SAC members, in consultation with office professionals, bring forward local knowledge of conditions that affect schools in their area, information which is most helpful to the Commission in making decisions on accreditation. Members of State Advisory Committees are appointed by the Commission to serve for a term of three years. Each SAC contains members chosen to represent the full variety of secondary schools in their area, and most are well-grounded in the evaluative process.

It is sometimes assumed that school administrators are reluctant to release teachers from the classroom to serve on visiting teams. Since a teacher's salary must be paid during his or her absence and, in addition, a substitute must be employed, it is obvious that each member of a visiting team represents an expense to his or her school district. But, in actuality, the CSS office receives many requests from school administrators for teachers from their schools to be asked to serve on visiting committees. Administrators have found that this experience is probably the best form of in-service training that can be found and is available nowhere else in the educational world. As members of a visiting committee, teachers have an opportunity to see a school in a way never before seen, since they are party to the examination of all reports of every program offered by the institution being evaluated. Also, at the same time, in their own minds they are evaluating their own schools. Most members of visiting committees return to their home schools with a sense of enthusiasm and a bounty of new ideas.

For many years the CSS program of evaluation and accreditation could not accommodate vocational/technical schools. Even though the Evaluative Criteria contained a section on technical education, the CSS decided that it was inadequate for evaluating the total program of a Vo/Tech school. Thus, despite an occasional inquiry from such a school, the lack of any appropriate evaluation materials stifled any real interest on the part of the CSS to move into the accreditation of Vo/Tech schools. However, in 1984 the V/T Guide, published by Schoolmasters, became available as an evaluation tool and has stimulated new interest and action. Soon after receiving the V/T Guide, the Commission approved its use and a number of Vo/Tech schools moved rapidly into the evaluation/accreditation program. As an outgrowth of this new venture, the Commission on Secondary Schools applied to the Federal Government in 1986 for recognition as an accrediting agency. Such recognition is required to enable CSS-accredited Vo/Tech schools to apply for federal funding.

Communications with member and candidate schools did not become a significant issue for the Commission until after the adoption of the Evaluative Criteria. In the ensuing period of rapid growth in MSA membership, many problems came to the surface that might have been avoided if the Commission had earlier established a strong program for participant instruction. It became clear that there was a lack of adequate direction for both visiting committee chairmen and members; in addition there was inadequate leadership by school administrators in carrying out the process of self-study.

To correct these problems, the Commission established a number of in-service training programs designed to produce a better and more universal understanding of CSS policies and procedures and to create a consistency of approach to the evaluation/accreditation process.

The development of a Policies and Procedures Handbook, which is constantly revised and updated, has become the principal means of communication with the membership. Workshops have become common-place: workshops for training visiting chairmen, for administrators whose schools are scheduled for evaluation, for administrators required to submit progress reports. A whole series of brochures has been written, each one of which focuses upon a particular aspect of evaluation and accreditation. In addition, broad-based brochures have been prepared for public relations purposes. All of these varied instruments—along with a series of films and film strips—have been extremely helpful in promoting positive relationships both within the Middle States Association and with the public-at-large. Public relations activities are constantly reviewed, improved and increased. The CSS developed a newsletter in 1970 to keep the membership informed about its activities. By providing information on changes in policy, dates for MSA events, and timely topics, it helps immeasurably to keep the membership up-to-date. The MSA itself publishes a quarterly Newsletter that serves the entire MSA constituency, educational organizations and government agencies.

The past sixty-five years of the Commission's history have been both eventful and successful. As of 1987 the number of secondary schools accredited by CSS stands at approximately 1,730. Over the years new schools have been added regularly, and, in some instances, schools have been dropped from membership. The most common reason for leaving has been the financial problems of school districts. Most schools that have left have been reluctant to conclude their membership, and many look forward to rejoining the MSA family at a later date.

Some schools have been removed from the MSA list for reasons other than financial. A few have merged with others, and some have closed. From time to time the Commission has found it necessary to terminate the membership of schools that have failed to take the remedial actions deemed necessary for continuing membership. These actions, always taken with great reluctance, follow a considerable period of time in which the Commission works with each school in question to help it solve its problems.

The Centennial celebration is a time for looking forward as well as for looking back. What is past is an interesting and important story of the growth and accomplishments of the Commission on Secondary Schools since it came into being in 1920. There are many highlights in the history of the Commission's work in which it can take just pride. In rare confrontations it has stood firm, but it has also proven itself adaptable and flexible to changing times and the changing needs of its constituency. However, this is also a time when the Commission might well pause in its work and plan for new and challenging goals in the Association's second century. Although the current school membership is 1,730, it is sobering to realize that this represents only about forty percent of the total number of secondary schools in the Middle States area. Thus, the Commission has much work to do not only for the 1,730 schools for which it has assumed real responsibility but also should resolve the possibly more important question of the extent of its responsibility to provide services to the sixty percent of regional schools which have so far not embraced membership in the Middle States Association.

By virtue of adopting the Evaluative Criteria, the Commission has long since moved into the area of providing services for the educational needs of secondary schools. The most important question that the Commission must confront in the immediate future is the degree and type of service that it could—and should—provide to all secondary schools, both the members of the Association and those which are not. In recent years severe budgetary problems have affected virtually every school. In the case of some public schools, financial difficulties have affected not only the instructional process but have resulted in a reduction in the amount of assistance that comes from state departments of public instruction. Perhaps this void in vital services is an area in which the Commission on Secondary Schools could make a major contribution to the continued welfare and improvement of secondary education in the second century life of the Middle States Association.

The Association and the Assembly of Elementary Schools

In March of 1957, the late Frank H. Bowles, a former chairman of the Commission on Higher Education and the current president of the College Entrance Examination Board, gave the keynote address at the annual meeting of the Association—and issued a challenge. The Association, Bowles began, had been originally founded to improve communication between schools and colleges. It had, however, evolved into an organization of two commissions that were focusing virtually all of their efforts upon a single purpose—accreditation far different from what the MSA had been established to accomplish. Indeed, to Bowles, MSA had, in reality, become little more than two separate accrediting associations, each of which operated in its own sphere and according to its own rules. Accreditation was "a laudable and necessary operation"—this Bowles conceded—but it was not a "sufficient role" for any regional association at a time when American education was entering the greatest period of growth in its history. The Middle States Association, Bowles argued, should return to its original purpose of improving communication between the worlds of secondary and higher education and focus its efforts upon developing a leadership position in both the planning and the development of education within the region. Moreover, Bowles concluded, the Association—the only regional educational organization that included institutions from both the secondary and higher education levels was uniquely positioned to carry out this critical mission and clearly had the talent, resources and experience to fulfill its assignment.

Bowles was speaking, in particular, to a group of trustees who were already considering a move in the direction that the Bowles speech would suggest. Kenneth Smiley, the Association president, for example, had long believed that the focus of the two commissions on accreditation meant that the Association was neglecting its historical concern for the transition from school to college and hoped to use the 1957 meeting to "redress the balance." Not a few felt there was real danger that the Association would split into its two component parts. Not surprisingly, then, the trustees, immediately following the Bowles speech, moved to appoint a special committee "charged with examining questions of school-college relations in the broadest sense."

In a very real sense the history of the Association in the last three decades has been the attempt to devise ways and means to carry out the mission that Frank Bowles outlined in 1957. It has not been an easy task, at times has seemed mission impossible. For despite movements like Advanced Placement or the post-Sputnik interest that many college faculty showed in modernizing the secondary school curriculum in mathematics and the sciences, the two worlds of secondary and higher education all too often have looked at each other, with some suspicion, across a gulf. There was and remains what one Executive Director has called "professional ethnocentrism." Moreover, it is clear in retrospect that Bowles issued his challenge at a time when American education was becoming increasingly specialized and when many in higher education, both faculty and administrators, were focusing more on the development of graduate education and advanced research programs than on improving communications with the secondary world. The structure of Middle States—commissions whose headquarters were in separate cities, a one-year presidency which rotated between a representative from higher education followed by some one from the secondary world—often created problems of its own. The latter, while it assured an equal voice for both secondary and higher education within the Association, has often raised the question of continuity. The former meant that individuals from the two spheres of Middle States simply did not know one another.

Thus, President Paul Bingaman, addressing the Association in 1974, many years after the Bowles speech, could say, "This is a unique organization. Two separate commissions have different goals, objectives, problems. If a quiz were given to the members of the Secondary Commission regarding many activities of the Higher Commission, I doubt that it would be passed or vice versa. I had no idea of the activities of the Higher Commission until I met with them as Second Vice President." Hence, it is not surprising that in 1972 the Association Study Committee was still examining such questions as, "Is the Association more than the sum total of the two Commissions and the Committee on School and College Relations?" and "Does the Association itself (apart from the Commissions) have a discrete entity and, if so, what is it?"

In the immediate aftermath of the 1957 meeting, the Association made several studies to determine how best to respond to the ideas that Frank Bowles had put forth. Some of the early recommendations were extremely ambitious—for example, the establishment of a third commission, co-equal to the other two, on school and college relations, even the creation of a so-called council of standards. Eventually, however, the Association settled for more modest goals. First, it was agreed that the Bylaws as well as the structure of the Board of Trustees should be revised, the Association formally incorporated, and a permanent executive staff employed. The Association was incorporated in New York, and in 1964 Calvin L. Crawford become the first full-time professional Administrative Secretary of the Association, ending for the Association—as it had ended for the CHE its all volunteer composition. Crawford was charged with the mission of serving the Trustees by giving the Association an agenda of its own. Second, studies were begun (which took years to carry out) on how the component parts of Middle States could be brought together and housed in a single location. Third, and most important, the trustees created, in 1962, a permanent subcommittee on School and College Relations.

For nearly twenty-five years the Committee on School and College Relations has studied and advised the trustees on the "line services to be rendered by the Association with respect to articulation between the secondary schools and colleges and other areas of joint concern to schools and colleges"—in short, to carry out an important item on the Bowles agenda. Originally, its members were the twelve elected Trustees, but in the early 'seventies it was changed to an appointed committee, and students were admitted as full members. The history of the Committee and its work in the area of articulation (which is best defined as "the process of facilitating the movement of individuals within and between institutions") has been sketched out in a recent "Annotated Chronology" prepared for the Centennial celebration by Calvin Crawford. As Crawford candidly concedes, "Programs as sleek as a Pierce Arrow are evident as are some with unmistakable Edsel characteristics." It was most active in the 'sixties, encountered some difficulties in the 'seventies and early 'eighties (in 1976 the Chair of the CSS even questioned the need for the Committee), but has recently become actively involved, principally as an evaluator, with the Commonwealth Partnership Project, a series of institutes in the humanities which was initially sponsored by the deans of twelve Pennsylvania colleges and whose purpose is to "create a blueprint for...collaborative effort between colleges and secondary schools leading to the improvement of education." Over the years the principal achievements of the Committee on School and College Relations have been timely publications and occasional workshops directly related to its concern with effective articulation. Among the most significant, *Survey of Space Availability for Freshmen and Transfer Students* (whose annual publication, incidentally, has continued to this day), *Guide to College Selection, Guide to the Selection of a Secondary School, The Junior College Transfer, The Disadvantaged Student, Recommended School and College Articulation Practices*, and q.

In 1967, President Laurence McGinley, in an extended progress report on the Association, noted several major accomplishments that had flowed from the actions taken by the Trustees since the Bowles speech. First, the Association had been kept from fragmenting into its two component parts and, second, "the potential for the welfare of education in our region is now being used in a broader way than previously, but in a way still related to the evaluation and accreditation function which the Middle States alone can perform." His report stressed that much of the improvement of education in the Middle States area and better articulation between schools and colleges was the result of the work of the various individuals who served on evaluation teams. And he cited as evidence a Middle States document which read, "It is understood that the process of evaluation and accreditation is in itself intended to foster the development of a climate which will be a force in realizing the general purpose of the Association...." In short, he reminded the Association that the evaluation and accreditation functions of the two commissions positively served the goals that Frank Bowles had proclaimed.

Additionally, the Association, which has responsibility for the program at the annual meeting, has tried to select topics which will not only be of interest to the entire membership but which also focus upon significant educational issues of the times. A listing of just a few of the programs of the past twenty-five years suggests their relevance—and, additionally, the way in which they directly relate to so many of the themes and issues discussed in this Centennial history: "The Changing Nature of the College and

University and What this Means to the Freshman" (1962), "The Politics of Education" (1969), "Financing Education" (1971), "Voluntarism versus Regulation" (1978), "Outcomes Assessment: A New Era in Accreditation" (1979), "Literacy and Education" (1980), "Accreditation on Trial" (1981), "Interdependence in Education" (1982), "Voluntary Accreditation and the Law: Alternatives in the Public Interest" (1984), and "Pursuing Excellence: 99 Years of MSA" (1986).

It was in the 1970s that the Association made perhaps its strongest effort to draw its component units into a coherent whole. In 1972 it engaged the consulting firm of Arthur D. Little to conduct an in-depth study of the Association and make recommendations for its future. The report, when issued early in 1974, noted that there was a lack of consensus "and even some tension" among both Middle States constituent institutions and its leaders about the specific role that the Association should play. Emphasizing, as Frank Bowles had done nearly two decades earlier, that the general objective was to "encourage the achievement of higher quality and to facilitate the development of better working relations among the higher institutions, secondary schools, and other agencies in the Middle States," the report called for the improvement of articulation—"while institutions may no longer have an acute need for such assistance, students do." It recommended that both commissions undertake more workshops on specific issues of articulation (such as getting community college graduates into four-year institutions) and suggested that more secondary school representatives serve on the Commission on Higher Education and vice versa. Along the same line, it strongly urged that all the various units of the Association be housed together in a common location in the interest of better personal interaction and communication and more efficient use of staff and resources.

The Association scheduled several study sessions to consider the Little report. Out of these, and other internal discussions, did emerge greater efforts at articulation (some already noted in the preceding sections on the two commissions) both between the world of secondary and higher education and within the Association itself. The CHE, for example, now included an educator from the secondary ranks, secondary school evaluators served on teams that visited institutions with teacher preparation programs at the pre-collegiate level or which included pre-collegiate instruction, and efforts were made to bring the two commissions and the trustees regularly together. But the principal response was the appointment of three committees: (1) to study the advisability of entering the area of elementary education (an issue on which the consultants had been somewhat ambiguous), (2) to advise on office consolidation and location, and (3) to re-examine the Charter and Bylaws.

Two years later, in 1976, the long-sought consolidation was achieved when the Association and the two commissions moved into a suite in the Science Center on Market Street in Philadelphia. But though there were immediate and obvious benefits to the move, there were also problems and tensions over turf, autonomy and resources. Additionally the trustees and the Commission on Higher Education became involved in the issue—first raised as a consequence of the Marjorie Webster lawsuit—of whether the commissions had "full and sole freedom" to work directly with government agencies or whether the Association, because of its legal liability, had rights of oversight. Eventually, in 1980, former Commissioner Ewald B. Nyquist produced a paper which, after much discussion, led to a document which satisfied all parties. Since 1976, many problems of internal organization have clearly been resolved, but structure committees have continued to work, and the Bylaws, revised in the light of the Little report and consolidation, have once again been the subject of scrutiny and re-examination. Thus, as of the Centennial celebration year, both the function and composition of the Board of Trustees remain unsettled. But the mission outlined thirty years ago by Frank Bowles retains its appeal. As Robert Kirkwood noted in his latest annual report on behalf of the Commission on Higher Education, remedial and developmental programs now exist on virtually every campus and are not confined to minorities and the disadvantaged. Therefore, he asked, "Is it not time to reexamine the issue and undertake joint explorations between pre-collegiate and postsecondary institutions to find ways of solving this critical issue...?"

The Committee on School and College Relations has taken on new life with its current involvement in partnership programs between schools and colleges, while a recent president of the Association, Edward J. Bloustein, succeeded in involving the trustees, both commissions and the Committee on School and College Relations in extended discussions about the neglect of the study of foreign languages at all levels of American education.

But the major outcome of the Arthur D. Little study, and the discussions that followed it, was the decision of the trustees of the Association to evaluate and accredit elementary schools. It was not a pioneering step since three other regionals were already in the field of primary school accreditation, and the Southern association had enjoyed considerable success with it. Nevertheless, the trustees proceeded cautiously. First, there was a feasibility study conducted by John Fisher, the former president of the Columbia University Teachers' College, a study which involved a survey of the opinions of some 900 school superintendents. Following Fisher's report in 1975 the Association sought and gained a grant from the National Study of School Evaluation to conduct a pilot study, and in December of that year John A. Stoops, then Dean of the School of Education at Lehigh University, was appointed as project director. After another favorable report in 1978 the Trustees acted to create the Assembly on Elementary Schools and designated the twenty schools that had gone through the pilot program as charter members of the Assembly. In 1980 Dr. Stoops became the full-time Executive Director.

But progress, the Executive Director later reported, was slower and "more sluggish than anticipated by any of the agencies that entered this field in the middle 'seventies." Budgets were tight; many state and regional agencies offered "less costly" evaluation services; and many elementary educators remained suspicious and questioned the value of accreditation below the secondary level. Finances were a constant concern, for the nascent Assembly was far from self-sufficient, and its deficits were a drain on the Association budget. The small size of the staff made it difficult to expand the membership and still provide the necessary services. There were also recurrent organizational problems. In 1982 the trustees proposed combining the Assembly with the Commission on Secondary Schools to create one overall Commission on Schools. But doubts and hesitations arose on all sides at what John Stoops later described as the "forc[ed] marriage of a groom who was unwilling to a bride who was disinclined." Then, to continue the Stoops metaphor, "As negotiations developed the groom became belligerent and the bride vowed to remain celibate." But the plan, for lack of a quorum, was never voted on by the membership of the Association and eventually was withdrawn.

Membership increased but slowly—from a few hundred in the late 'seventies to approximately 800 candidates/members in 1985 with the anticipation of adding 100 new schools per year and soon reaching a level of 1000 (out of approximately 12,000 elementary schools in the Middle States region). The number of schools which had completed the accreditation process was, however, considerably smaller. In 1980, of the 400 members schools only 35 had undergone evaluation and received accreditation, but by 1985 approximately half of the 800 were now fully accredited. In the early stages most of the members were small district systems or free-standing institutions, but the decision of the Pittsburgh school district to include all 73 of its elementary schools in an evaluation gave the Assembly entry into a large urban system.

Yet though progress was slow, it was also real. The Assembly leadership, realizing that success depended on its own efforts—in the words of the Executive Director, "if the Assembly depends on forces from without, it is dead in the water"—developed many new and innovative procedures. Among them were self-study guides for district-wide evaluations, for Catholic schools and, in 1986, for special education schools. Workshops for training evaluators were established, and John Stoops wrote two handbooks on elementary school evaluation and accreditation. Out of the wreckage of the failed proposal for a Commission on Schools there emerged, at the initiative of both the AES and CSS, the K-12 Committee which has since functioned to evaluate and accredit those institutions which combine elementary and secondary education. Moreover, the Assembly staff believes that, if the recent experience of other regionals is any criterion, the Assembly—and the Association—may have gained rather than lost by retaining separate and distinct accreditation units for elementary and secondary schools. In any event, as the Association reaches its hundredth birthday, and its newest component the tender age of nine, there is confidence that the Assembly, like the Commissions on Secondary Schools and on Higher Education, has firmly established the principle that elementary accreditation is "a method of educational improvement, not a listing of institutional elite."

The Princeton Conference And the Birth of the Self-Study Process: June 20–21, 1957

Background and Purpose of the Conference

by Ewald B. Nyquist
Chair of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

The reason for our meeting here today dates back to 1946 when the Middle States Association adopted some broad general policies which have undergone extensive refinement in the interim but remain unchanged in substance. Simply stated, and they will be amplified by Mr. Jones later, they are as follows:

1. Evaluation of an institution as a total entity
2. Re-evaluation of member institutions
3. A ten-year period in which to complete re-evaluation of all member institutions
4. Evaluation conducted by a team of evaluators drawn from the membership of the Association
5. Evaluation of an institution in terms of its purposes and objectives and how well it achieves them
6. The establishment of criteria for evaluation stated qualitatively and under headings of purposes and objectives, program, organization, resources, and outcomes
7. The development of a questionnaire by an institution preceding an evaluation which allowed for self-evaluation.

Since 1946 and before 1954, several things happened which led to additional changes.

1. A do-it-yourself attitude and technique set in during the post-war years in higher education. More seriously, on the basis that improvement which comes from within is more virtuous than that which is compelled or suggested from without, self-evaluation became a popular means of making change or of reaffirming old truths.

The Middle States Association had much to do with promoting this valuable means of analysis. The context giving form to its inception was probably created from the post-war "agonizing reappraisal" of the very purpose of higher education; the impingement of management-labor concepts and methods of industrial organization and administration on higher education; wholesale curricular revisement and experimentation; the need for new departures in financial support and development; spectacular advances in the accumulation and application of new knowledge; and the anticipation of vast college population growth.

Whatever the causes, higher education has put more emphasis on introspection and soul-searching in this last decade than in most comparable periods. This emphasis has been reflected in the Commission's policies and practices.

In 1946, self-evaluation as a part of the process of accrediting and re-affirmation of accreditation was considered as permissive and an anticipated by-product of the entire procedure.

In 1946, in answer to the question from the floor, when new departures were being proposed, if colleges and universities were to be permitted to do a self-evaluation before they were visited, Frank H. Bowles, former Chairman of this Commission, answered as follows:

> "That opportunity is always open. We should hope that it would be done. That is one of the reasons for making available an inspection schedule well in advance."

Today, while self-evaluation is still permissive, the Commission places a heavy emphasis on the process as one of the most important parts of our procedures, if not the most important. Our documents make it almost impossible for an institution to avoid self-analysis, in one form or another.

2. The second change which has taken place during the last ten years has been the re-organization of the Commission itself in several aspects. Since 1946, the membership of the Commission has increased from 12 to 15. An Executive Committee was created to enable the Commission to conduct its work efficiently. An Executive Secretary was employed in order to cope with mounting responsibilities, and again, to enable the Commission to conduct its work efficiently, and to achieve in greater measure its purpose to improve higher education.

3. Thirdly, accrediting at large came in for national and concentrated attention. Also, the Association of American Universities abandoned its accrediting program. Numerous opportunities arose for cooperative effort with other accrediting agencies and agencies concerned accrediting and required considerable involvement of the Commission's personnel. One consequence has been formalized agreements with several professional accrediting agencies which provide for mutual exchange of confidential information, collaboration in evaluations, and common questionnaires when practicable. Another important result is that regional accrediting agencies have emerged as the important nucleus for all other accrediting activity.

4. A fourth change has been in the criteria defining eligibility of an institution for an evaluation and hence membership in the Association. In 1921, when Middle States accrediting began, only 4-year liberal arts colleges were qualified. Gradually other types of institutions were included: Engineering institutions in 1927, classical junior colleges in 1932, and teachers colleges in 1937, all in separate accredited lists.

It was not until the 1940s that any institution with a program containing two years of liberal arts, was considered eligible. In 1954, on the basis that the Association existed to assist and improve higher education at large, the Commission moved to include all other professional, technical, and specialized institutions at the level of higher education so long as their programs provided, emphasized, or rested upon, liberal (general) education. Thus was the last quantitative criterion of the Commission eliminated, and thus, too, was the burden of the Commission increased.

To give you an indication of the growth in the membership of the Association, let me state that in 1921, there were 60 charter members and today there are 250. From 1921 to 1931, the membership increased 75%. From 1931 to 1941, the increase was about 35%, and the same increase of 35% occurred between 1951 and 1951. Since 1951, the increase has been 30%. It looks as if this decade through 1961 will provide the largest increase in the membership since the first decade. There are several good reasons for so which I shall report on later.

5. A fifth change which has occurred in the last decade has been the basis of support for the Commission's operations. In 1952, the dues were changed from $40 and $15 for four-year institutions and junior colleges, respectively, to the following scale: $50 for junior collages, $100 for colleges and universities with a total enrollment of 1,000 and under, and $150 for institutions with an enrollment of over 1,000. Our accumulated deficit since 1953 has been about $5.00!

6. A final change which has occurred in the last decade has been increased communication from the Commission to its membership through various means. Perhaps more needs to be done in this connection by the Commission. I wish only to report that substantial improvements have been made over the years.

Since 1954

The foregoing review was deliberately restricted to the period 1946-1954.

In 1954, looking towards the completion of the first cycle of re-evaluation in 1950, the Commission adopted a proposal for a self-evaluation of its own policies and practices which would involve representatives of the membership. There are several parts to this process of self-analysis:

1. We have been successful in formalizing many of the Commission's policies and procedures and in publishing them.

2. Fuller development of the plan envisaged in 1946 has been accomplished, calling for published documents embodying good standards and practices in the main areas of any institution's operations.

3. The provision for increased consultative services to our membership.

4. Improved organization of the Commission to enable it to conduct its work efficiently. Formed were two important standing committees: (a) a Committee on Follow-up Activities which assists the Commission in analyzing Reports of Progress from our member institutions, and (b) a Committee on Evaluation Reports which again assists the Commission in reviewing evaluation reports submitted by our Visiting Committees. These two committees are advisory only.

5. An annual meeting of the membership was devoted to a program soliciting suggestions for improvement of the main policies governing the Commission's work. I can report here that the membership in 1954 had no serious criticism of the way the Commission has been operating. Preferential votes for reconsidering the idea of re-evaluating member institutions and the ten year re-evaluation cycle were fewest of all. The areas which received the heaviest indication of concern were cooperative relationships with specialized accrediting agencies, research, and continued development of self-evaluation techniques and our questionnaire. I report these things to you simply to complete the record. It does not mean that we cannot re-examine these policies at this conference.

6. At our annual meetings we have attempted to introduce workshops in order to create greater uniformity in the procedures of committee evaluation and to create greater understanding amongst our constituency of our various policies and practices.

7. Finally, I should report that our questionnaires have been reviewed often and substantial changes made for the purpose of stimulating self-evaluation more than simple reporting of facts out of context.

In 1954, the conference we are holding today was envisaged as a necessary part of our self-analysis. At the close of this report, I shall review with you the purpose of our meeting and the status of this group.

Attitudes on Accrediting

Before I come to the conclusion of this report on the background and the purposes of our meeting, perhaps it might be wise to give you a brief account of some basic viewpoints on accrediting which are held by and large, I believe, by your Commission.

1. Accrediting can be defined as the formal recognition of an institution based on an analysis of the merits of its operations. More important, however, the single function of your Commission is to help improve the quality of higher education in this region. Our viewpoint is that accreditation is simply a means to that end. It is not important of itself, but only as a stimulus to institutional improvement and as a recognition of sound achievement by those who are in the best position to assess it—mature, experienced colleagues.

The concern of the Commission, therefore, is not to restrict the accredited list but to enlarge it by doing everything possible to aid institutions become worthy of inclusion in it; but since the Commission is responsible for accreditation, it must handle it honestly. It is determined, at the same time, to use it as a constructive force.

2. The Commission is a creature of our colleges and universities. As such it must be responsive to the wishes of the membership. It is not some stern, brooding, inaccessible omnipresence in the academic sky, hovering in aloofness over higher education, held suspended only with providential assistance, and impressing a matrix of standardization on all that comes within its purview.

The Commission has an invisible means of support but not of this nature.

3. The Middle States Association is a form of voluntary cooperation and self-government. As such, this accrediting agency, typical of others, is an American phenomenon, a necessary adjunct to our educational effort, and probably, in combined terms of diversity, quantity, and general competence of member institutions, unmatched.

Loosely controlled by local boards of governance, colleges and universities have a great deal of freedom but this freedom is not just “plain freedom period,” meaning that colleges can do as they please. Freedom without values only “creates latitude for error,” as someone has pointed out.

In order to exercise the freedom granted to colleges and universities, and conversely in order not to lose control to outside authority, colleges and universities banded together in various ways to form accrediting societies. In substitution for external restraint and to show their appreciation of the responsibilities of liberty, colleges themselves provided various forms of self-control in order to ensure that a least minimum standards of academic performance would be maintained and in order to assure the public, and each other, that colleges could be trusted with the liberty granted to them to work out their own destinies and to achieve educational maturity and competence. This, then, can be conceived of as a public responsibility.

Accrediting as I see it, then, is designed in part to help some institutions accelerate the process by which they achieve maturity and maintain competence; for others it is a matter of making better, institutions already adjudged to be good.

4. Highly competent institutions may question the necessity for accrediting, at least insofar as it pertains to them. The attitude of the Commission is that the best of our institutions, if only on a noblesse oblige basis, are obligated through this additional Middle States means to reveal standards and procedures for distinguished work, thereby performing a service to the whole community of higher education.

On the other hand, the Commission has had a few occasions, often invited, to challenge the contentments of high competence.

Unaccredited Institutions

A word should be said about the number of unaccredited institutions of higher learning in the Middle States territory. By an inaccurate but probably conservative count, there are at the present time something like 100 to 150 institutions in our territory which are eligible for an evaluation. And many more will be created in the next decade and one-half.

In the State of New York with which I have some deeper acquaintance, just since 1950, 30 institutions have been chartered by the Regents or created by statutory provisions. Of these, only 4 have recently become members of the Middle States Association. The State of New York, in creating new institutions of one kind and another, averages about four per year.

For sometime to come, we can expect a substantial number of new institutions seeking accreditation, perhaps 10 to 15 per year. These will be comprised of the following groups of institutions:

1. Community colleges and technical institutes, offering programs two or three years in duration. Many more of these will come into existence in the years ahead. A substantial number already exist and are not yet accredited.
2. Roman Catholic seminaries, both major and minor
3. An odd number of other types of junior colleges, usually private
4. Specialized institutions in the fine and applied arts
5. Four-year institutions for lay students, under religious auspices
6. A miscellaneous group of professional and specialized institutions, usually private, graduate or undergraduate

In addition, we can expect to see a few two-year institutions, usually under private auspices, becoming four-year institutions. In the case of member institutions, at the present time, a re-evaluation is required.

I have made these estimates since it is important to know what our burden of evaluation could be in the future in connection with institutions which are not yet members.

Purpose of the Conference

As I stated earlier, this conference was envisaged in 1954 by the Commission's action.

We met here to review the policies and practices of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education and to make recommendations for their improvement and/or reaffirmation, to the Commission. Thus the conference is advisory.

The Commission will have a special meeting early in the Fall to review the report of this conference. One of two things will then occur at the November meeting of the full Association: (a) Should there be no substantive changes in the policies and procedures, meaning that they are re-affirmed, then such fact will be reported to the Association; (b) Should there be important changes in our policies, then the full Association will be asked to give them their approval.

At any rate, whatever the outcome in the way of either new or reaffirmed policies, they would become effective for all institutions beginning the academic year, 1958-59.

We have four broad questions to answer. They are contained on the program which has been distributed to you. They are as follows:

1. Has the re-evaluation process for member institutions been worth its cost in time and money to the institution concerned?

2. If the process is retained in substantially its present form, how can it be made more useful to the institution?

3. Would the substitution of some other project be more valuable to our member institutions?

4. What should the Commission's general program be after the current re-evaluation cycle?

As far as the Commission is concerned, the discussion may range in the extreme, from the possibility of abolishing our accrediting function to the one of re-affirming and retaining intact, our present practices.

On behalf of the Commission, may I say how grateful we are to all the participants for their willingness to devote their time and effort in a worthy cause. It is my trust that this conference will be characterized by the same virtues customarily reflected in the meetings of the Commission: candor, congenial fellowship and good humor. May I exercise some of the latter and lead off this conference with a reference to an article in *The American Scholar* by Martin ten Hoor, the Dean of the University of Alabama, which begins with these paragraphs of well-turned phrases. I have used them effectively in the past.

> "There is the recent popularity of educational surveys. Most states and many institutions have experienced several. I have lived through eleven without noticeable improvement in myself or my neighbors. Note the procedure and the technique, for there you will fine the moral. The surveyors are always from another state or another institution. This is in accordance with the well-known principle that an expert is an ordinary person who is away from home. These outsiders are brought in because of their objectivity, objectivity being the capacity for discovering faults abroad which you cannot recognize at home. To be a good educational surveyor…you must have a sharp eye for foreign motes, but a dull one for domestic beams. You must be a contented extrovert, so that after diagnosing the faults of others you can continue to live in perfect comfort with your own.
>
> "It does seem to me that these days there are too many leaders and too few followers; too many preachers and too few sinners—self-conscious sinners, that is. If this were an illustrated article I would insert at this point a wonderful cartoon I saw not long ago. A little boy was asking an obviously astounded and embarrassed father, 'But if we're here to help others, what are the others here for?' Nobody has time these days to improve himself, so busy is he with attempts to improve his neighbor. There is something wrong with that equation. It seems to me that it is time to try to balance it. I suggest that this can be done by shifting some weight from one side to the other, by shifting the emphasis from social improvement to self-improvement. I suggest that over the door of every academic cubicle there should hang the sign which Thoreau had over the door of his hut: 'My destiny mended here, not yours'."

Later on Mr. ten Hoor closes with this comment:

> "This absorbing concern for the improvement of one's neighbors is undoubtedly a product of civilization. It is doubtful if primitive man worried much about it. The cannibal, in fact, represents the other extreme. He uses his neighbor solely for his own improvement."

Analysis of Discussion at the Conference on Middle States Evaluation Policies and Procedures

June 20-21, 1957, at Princeton, New Jersey

Twenty-seven persons who had extensive recent experience with Middle States evaluation work met by invitation of the Association's Commission on Institutions of Higher Education on June 20-21, 1957, at the Nassau Tavern, Princeton, New Jersey, to assess the results of the Commission1s activities in the past decade and to advise the Commission and Association on its program after completion of the current evaluation cycle.

The members of the conference were:

* Ewald B. Nyquist, Deputy Commissioner of Education for the State of New York, Chairman of the Commission and of this conference

* Edward K. Cratsley, Vice President, Swarthmore College

* Finla G. Crawford, Vice Chancellor, Syracuse University

Alfred D. Donovan, Vice President, Seton Hall University

President Wilson H. Elkins, University of Maryland

President Calvet N. Ellis, Juniata College

* Millard E. Gladfelter, Provost of Temple University and Vice Chairman of the Commission

President Paul S. Havens, Wilson College

President Martin D. Jenkins, Morgan State College

F. Taylor Jones, Executive Secretary of the Commission

President Otto Klitgord, New York City Community College of Applied Arts and Sciences

President Katharine McBride, Bryn Mawr College

President Robert W. McEwen, HamiIton College

* Rev. L. J. McGinley, S. J., President of Fordham University and Secretary of the Commission

* Albert E. Meder, Jr., Dean of Administration, Rutgers University

President Frederic K. Miller, Lebanon Valley College

* Mother E. M. 0'Byrne, President of Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart

Claude E. Puffer, Vice Chancellor, University of Buffalo

Rev. William G. Ryan, President of Seton Hill College

* E. Kenneth Smiley, Vice President of Lehigh University and President of the Association

President Donnal V. Smith, Cortland, N. Y., State Teachers College

Brother E. Stanislaus, President, LaSalle College

President Clara M. Tead, Briarcliff College

Dean Winton Tolles, Hamilton College

President William Van Note, Clarkson College of Technology

President Roscoe L. West, Trenton, N. J., State Teachers College

President Mortin D. Whitaker, Lehigh University, Secretary-treasurer of the Notional Commission on Accrediting

* Members of the Middle States Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

Mr. Nyquist reviewed the history and policies of Middle States accrediting and the purpose and advisory function of the conference, and Mr. Jones outlined the Commission's current materials and process. The ensuing discussions and suggestions will be summarized under the four basic questions with which the conference was concerned, without attribution since concurrence on many points was general.

The conference was concerned primarily, but not exclusively, with the periodic re-evaluation of member institutions.

I. Has the re-evaluation process for member institutions been worth its cost in time and money to the institution concerned?

It evidently was to the four institutions whose presidents had been requested to report in detail (LaSalle College, Morgan State College, New York City Community College of Applied Arts and Sciences, University of Maryland). The evaluations were credited with bringing about or speeding up needed internal reorganization and revision of academic and instructional policies, increasing the faculty's understanding and morale, and in some instances with enabling the president to obtain substantially larger appropriations. The results were called "gratifying," "invaluable," "revolutionary."

There was no attempt to generalize from these remarks, but no one expressed a contrary opinion, and the consensus at the end of the conference that the Commission should continue its evaluation program suggests general agreement with the reporters. The repeated remark that more time of more people should be invested in the self-evaluation indicates that the burden on the institution's staff is not begrudged.

There was lengthy discussion of the willingness and ability of the member institutions to continue to supply the high-level manpower necessary to constitute the evaluation teams, especially as the program grows with the increasing number of new applicants. The value to the individual is evident. The reflected value to his employing institution is less tangible. At the end of this part of the conversation there seemed no general serious doubt that the manpower is available. Some felt we have not yet really topped our potential.

The present policy of asking people to serve not more than once a year under ordinary circumstances was endorsed and will be continued. One speaker's point that no member of a staff or faculty ought to be used too continuously lest it place him in a false position among his colleagues and even tend toward a sort of professionalism was received with interest. Obviously no small team should contain two people from the same institution, yet this does sometimes happen when some of its members are appointed by cooperating agencies.

II. If the process is retained in substantially its present form, how can it be made more useful to the institution?

Many of the suggestions can be grouped under one of four heads, three of which look toward intensifying present practices:

1. Continue to emphasize self-evaluation.

Recognition of the role of the institution itself in the evaluation and of the function and ability of the Middle States process to stimulate self-evaluation and turn it in a constructive direction was implicit in the consideration of all the proposals to modify the process, and was frequently expressed. There appeared to be no disposition to question the premise that since the real benefit to the institution must come from within, the entire process must be designed first of all to help the institution discover, analyze, and cope with its own problems. The questionnaire and visit give form and urgency to the self-evaluation, the team's report reinforces or balances it, and the Commission's action recognizes the quality of performance and promise of continued effectiveness it reveals.

Several of those who had recently directed their own self-evaluation, including some whose institutions had done the work most thoroughly, said they wished they had started even earlier and had drawn more of the staff, faculty people, and students into it, for their own good. They had found that the value of the total project depends largely on the extent to which it is used as an occasion for and means of comprehensive internal analysis, criticism, planning, and staff education, and that even they had not taken this part seriously enough.

Two reasons were touched upon: failure to realize the potential value of full staff participation in an institutional self-evaluation, and misconception of its nature—thinking of it as a study for the Middle States Association rather than as a study for the institution's own benefit; which of course means that the nature and purpose of the whole enterprise has not quite been grasped. It must be given clearer and more emphatic expression.

The Commission was also encouraged to continue developing and improving the Questionnaire Guide as an instrument for critical self-evaluation, as it has been doing, rather than as the older type of device for collecting data. Its function is to help the institution appraise, criticize, and strengthen its own work, not defend it. The factual and statistical information required should be only that which the institution itself needs to understand its operations and plan their improvement. A good questionnaire should stimulate continuous self-evaluation.

2. Center attention on instruction rather than on organization, administration, finance, or facilities.

The logical necessity of focusing the evaluation primarily on the institution's performance of the work for which it exists is as clear as is the difficulty of doing so. The conferees felt that the Commission should explore and use all possible ways of giving it this orientation. Suggestions included a shift of emphasis in the questionnaire, more flexible use of it, a larger number and proportion of evaluators for the program area, especially in liberal arts, in even the small teams, the employment of more teaching faculty members as evaluators, and more experimenting with such techniques as observation of teaching and student interviewing.

The size, balance, and personnel of the team came in for extended discussion. The organizational and administrative side of the institution is so much easier to get at that the older "inspection" pattern tended to concentrate on them, and we have not quite freed ourselves from that preoccupation. They cannot be neglected, but they need to be studied as devices for facilitating instruction and research instead of as important in themselves. The team members who have special competence in finance, plant, and library, for instance, ought not be permitted to isolate themselves and confine their attention to those parts of the institution. They should range widely in their observations and conversations,

being more interested in the service/use/ and effect on instruction than in systems, charts, and techniques.

Perhaps it would be better not to stipulate areas of responsibility so sharply in announcing team memberships. The list might be headed in quite a new way, suggesting the relating of all the areas of evaluation to the instructional program. The chairman could be given more information in advance about his team members' experience and left free to guide them in such a way as to ensure coverage with the desired kind of balance.

Some members of the conference remarked that the increasingly important area of student personnel services has often had insufficient attention. There was agreement that clear provision should be made for covering it as part of the educational program.

3. Complete the transformation of the evaluation report into a constructively critical document for the use of the institution, growing out of a cooperative analysis of its work.

The realization that the report should be written for the institution rather than for the Commission is changing the thinking of our teams. Despite occasional lapses, the reports of the past two or three years have usually been more suitable for faculty as well as presidential use than previously. The Commission has found them no less useful for accreditation purposes, especially since they are always supplemented by the chairman's oral presentation when the report is considered for Commission action. The conference members viewed this as a logical and proper development.

The aim can be achieved only if three conditions are present: the visitors must think of themselves as consultants rather than as inspectors; the institution must accept them in this spirit and deal candidly with them; and the evaluators must form and test their judgments in close communication with the responsible personnel of the institution.

Instilling the desired attitude within the team is the team chairman's job, backed by the most forceful literature and instructions the Commission can provide. Two new devices for helping him to do so are the workshop for evaluators which was conducted in connection with the Association's November 1956 Convention, and the workshops for chairmen and team members projected for November 1957.

The institution's attitude is influenced by the Commission's printed materials and public statements; by the preparatory visits and communications of the Executive Secretary; and by the personal experience of its staff members who are invited to serve on Middle States teams. One hundred thirty-seven member institutions, which is 55% of the total number, were represented in the 1955-56 and 1956-57 teams, and the spread is increasing.

Factual errors, biased interpretations, and unfounded generalizations become serious matters when wide circulation of a report has been promised. Various familiar ways or guarding against them were reviewed in the conference. The visitors should talk with a wide variety of people, and invariably should check their findings and interpretations with the responsible person in the area concerned before they leave the campus. They should listen more than talk—this injunction was repeated so often at the conference that evidently it needs more attention. They should avoid minutiae and obiter dicta, both in conversation and in writing. They should never presume to instruct the institution or take doctrinaire positions.

Certain new techniques were discussed also. The growing practice of sending a draft of the report to the president of the institution for criticism before it is duplicated was not only commended but urged as standard practice. It requires close timing, which the Executive Secretary was directed to facilitate, and precise mutual understanding of the respective roles of the president and the chairman, lest the result be to water down the report by avoiding things which should be said or blurring criticisms or recommendations which should be incisive. There was ample testimony that such untoward effects can be prevented and the report significantly strengthened through review by the president before the final editing.

An innovation in mechanics which has been tried a few times for other reasons has some of the same implications. In these cases the team chairman has arranged to have the institution mimeograph his team's report instead of doing it himself, since he did not have proper facilities for it and would have had to use a commercial firm at considerable cost to the institution.

The conferees felt this was a promising idea. It relieves the heavily burdened chairman of one chore, and it brings the widely varying cost of duplicating under control. But it also gives the report to the institution before it is published and before the Commission acts on it. The conference did not appear to find this objectionable, but it does alter the three-cornered relationship among the team, the institution, and the Commission. On the other hand it is consistent with the consultation-report concept, and the relationship has been altered anyhow, for the better in the opinion of the conference, by the president's work on the draft.

Another suggestion was that the Executive Secretary might have the report duplicated, the chairman's responsibility being to supply him with a clean copy. This procedure would be quite acceptable, but would be rather expensive, since the Executive Secretary would have to have the job done commercially.

It has long been standard practice to conclude the evaluation visit with a "round-up" conference of the team in which the positions to be taken in the written report are defined and agreed upon, followed by a final conference between the chairman and the president, plus whomever else they invite, in which the chairman gives the president an oral preview of the team's findings and recommendations. The workshop members agreed that these final conferences in some form are essential, and that the concluding interview with the president must not be a one-way lecture—it needs to be a conversation about the team's views, with plenty of opportunity for questioning, explanation, and debate. The workshop heard with interest that in several instances this year and last the two final sessions were telescoped into one. The president was invited to attend and participate in the long, frank, crucial, and heretofore private "round-up" meeting of the team members where their conflicting views are threshed out and the nature and content of the report are formulated. The chairmen who had tried it reported that it had proved in these selected instances a most stimulating and fruitful experience. The conference showed no disposition to endorse the procedure for general use, but neither did there seem to be any sharp reaction against its experimental employment under appropriate circumstances.

4. Allow the Commission when desirable to design the re-evaluation procedure for member institutions individually, adapting it to the needs and welfare of the institution.

This is the one radical change the conference proposed. The feeling was that the experience gained in the present program and the direction in which it is developing justify the Commission in experimenting with procedures shaped to meet the needs of particular institutions, especially of established members of the Association. The conference did not spell out the details, but had no difficulty in agreeing on several principles:

a) The re-evaluation idea is sound. It should be continued, and should apply in an appropriate but not necessarily identical way to all member institutions at periodic intervals.

b) The evolving present procedures will probably continue to serve best for many, perhaps most, institutions, but the Commission should be free to modify them at its discretion to meet the circumstances and needs of individual colleges and universities.

c) The process in any case should emphasize continuing institutional self-evaluation, should involve a positive relationship with the Commission, and should include the kind of interchange of experience and views on the part of a variety of persons which the team visits now offer.

d) When other studies of an institution's operations are available and relevant, a Middle States evaluation program should take advantage of them.

e) Normal procedures should be modified only in consultation with the institution concerned.

A number of detailed suggestions for improving our present practices emerged during the conferences, in addition to the policy matters summarized above. They concerned:

The Team

Its personnel should be drawn from institutions reflecting the type and competence of the one being visited, yet should include persons with a variety of backgrounds and points of view. (The conference did not indicate just how these somewhat mutually exclusive requirements are to be met.) The members should be encouraged to study the Middle States documents thoroughly before the visit. The documents themselves should be made as concise as possible, to facilitate their use.

The Chairman

The preliminary visits to the institutions many of the chairmen have been making, several weeks or months before the team's trip, are most useful to both parties. They aid orientation, allay tensions, and should be encouraged. Either on such a visit or by letter the chairman should have a precise understanding with the president as to detailed arrangements for the team, and that time consuming social entertainment will be kept to a minimum.

The Host Faculty

The faculty and the trustees of the institution to be visited need thorough briefing on the purpose and procedures of the team, and what they can do to help the team get a fair view and to gain the greatest benefit for the institution. A member of the conference spoke also of the possibility of inviting the chairman of the team to return the fall after the visit to discuss the report at a faculty meeting. His status would be that of a consultant, inasmuch as the team would have been discharged and he could not speak for the Commission. On the other hand it is unfortunately still true that some faculties never see the Middle States report.

Cooperating Agencies

Full participation in the team conferences is desirable. The habit of some groups to send only one representative to team meetings does not achieve the full purpose.

Time

There appeared to be no general disposition to lengthen Middle States visits. Few challenged the statement that three days are enough even for complex institutions.

The Commission

Several expressed the wish that more could be done to make generally available the Commission's observations of good institutional practice. Publication of lists of institutions which have been notably successful in various aspects of their work was suggested. Paralleling the questionnaire step by step with sample responses by good but differing institutions was mentioned; and issuing lists of people available as consultants. It was pointed out that the Commission is engaged in an extended project of describing good practices in its series of new documents, of which the recent ones on trustees and on women in higher education are examples. The questionnaire proposal seemed rather elaborate. The idea of publishing lists of consultants, it was reported, was considered three or four years ago but was abandoned in favor of offering names privately to inquiring presidents, a service which was announced and which has been used rather widely.

III. Would the substitution of some other project for the re-evaluation program be more valuable for our member institutions?

Apparently not, in the view of the conference. Ways of altering and strengthening the present work were discussed, and possible new areas of interest were suggested, but nothing was offered to take the place of the Commission's evaluation and re-evaluation activities.

Two approaches which differ from current procedures were opened for discussion. One was to emphasize self-evaluation to such an extent that team visits would be used only occasionally, when preliminary information indicated particular need for them. Member institutions might be asked to make comprehensive reports periodically; or might be requested to report annually on a certain phase of their work. But little interest was shown in ideas which involve surrendering regular team visits. A good deal was said about their direct value to the institution and also about their importance as almost a unique means of widespread and intimate exchange of experience and points of view.

Another radical question asked whether the premise is valid that using a large number of voluntary evaluators produces better overall results and benefit than employment of a few full-time paid specialists, men and women on leave for the purpose, or perhaps retired administrators. There seemed little desire to debate it.

A new opportunity for service, which reaches back to the first subject of association concerning high school-college relations, was projected in the thought that the Commission might do something practical about the multiple-application problem. Mr. Smiley predicted that a clearing house of some sort will ultimately have to be established. It may not be the function of the Middle States Association to provide it, but we might well contribute to the thinking and negotiating which must precede a solution. Mr. Smiley also suggested that the Association might be helpful in standardizing meanings for various forms of nomenclature involving financial assistance.

IV. What should the Commission's general program be after the current re-evaluation cycle?

The Commission's problem, as Mr. Cratsley summed it up, is how best to combine the values of self-evaluation with those of group evaluation in the service of our institutions of higher education. We want to retain and promote both. Self-evaluation should be continuous, but there is also the group-self comprised of the community of institutions which has its own functions of creating standards, disciplining itself, and cross-fertilizing its members' thinking.

The conference agreed that the present process as it is evolving and improving serves well for initial accreditation; and that some form of periodic re-evaluation is desirable for member institutions. The re-evaluation process should be adapted to the needs and interests of particular institutions, should promote self-analysis, and should continue to provide means and opportunities for personal contacts and exchange of views. Instruction, not administration, should be the focal point in all evaluations.

These opinions will be presented in greater detail to the Commission to assist it in preparing recommendations for the Association's attention in November 1957.

Detailed Recommendations to the Commission

a) Continue to use the present evaluation process for applicants for Middle States membership, improving and developing it as experience allows and as suggested in this conference.

b) Reaffirm the importance of continuous self-evaluation for all institutions, not only in connection with Middle States visits.

c) Continue the periodic re-evaluation of member institutions, with freedom to adapt the procedures experimentally and differentially to the best interests of the individual institution. Newly accredited members might be served best by the present process. The length of the cycle was mentioned only in passing. Some conferees thought ten years about right; others suggested lengthening it.

d) Emphasize the evaluation of instruction.

e) Continue developing norms and descriptions of good practice and making them available through publications and consultants. A program of research should prove valuable to this end.

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The Ten Theses of F. Taylor Jones

1. Institutional evaluation and accreditation by non-governmental agencies must be made available at once to all secondary, post-secondary, and higher education institutions, including occupational and technical institutions, trade schools, and proprietary schools.
2. Institutions should be evaluated and accredited by their peers. Immediate agreements are needed to allocate responsibilities among accrediting agencies. The Federation[6] should work with the Interim Council in negotiating them.
3. The primary role of the regional associations is the accreditation of non-profit institutions which include among their offerings programs which provide, emphasize, or rest upon general education. Accreditation of other kinds of institutions should be relinquished to their peer groups.
4. The regional associations and commissions should vigorously aid, support, encourage, and cooperate with the organizations which evaluate and accredit other aspects of education.
5. It is time for the regional commissions of higher education to eliminate the major barrier to their effectiveness by combining and centralizing their policy formation, their operating procedures, and the authenticating of their accrediting actions.
6. The regional commissions for higher education should provide program accrediting within institutional accrediting when institutions want it and are prepared to pay for it.
7. Institutional accrediting should shift its attention from student preparation to student achievement after admission.
8. Accreditation requires professionally qualified, mature, disinterested judgment. Lay persons and students can participate by the provision of source material for evaluation.
9. The public has a right to know more than the accredited status of the institution.
10. Accreditation agencies must scrupulously observe due process in respect of the institutions concerned in altering accreditation requirements and in individual accrediting actions.

F. Taylor Jones[7]
January 1, 1970

6 Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions in Higher Education (FRACHE)

7 F. Taylor Jones was the first full-time Executive Secretary (now called President) of the Commission on Higher Education, serving from 1953 to 1970.