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Metropolitan colleges and universities are not only academic institutions; they are also corporate entities with responsibilities regarding their physical and social environment that go beyond their educational mission. At a minimum they should be held to the same set of standards and expectations regarding potentially adverse effects that private sector enterprises have come to accept as part of their price of doing business. As academic institutions they should also take the initiative to improve their neighborhood. Occidental College in Los Angeles is a case study of an institution attempting to rise to the challenge of being a good corporate citizen by looking for ways of directly tying its educational mission to the well-being of its neighbors, and by using its institutional influence and assets to address broader social problems.

Metropolitan Universities as Responsible Corporate Citizens

During the past decade, a clamor arose demanding that private sector corporate America become more socially responsible, particularly in the area of environmental concerns. Corporation after corporation has been scrutinized as to how its policies and practices contribute to safe, clean environments. As a result, even corporations that initially held the position that the environment was "not their business" have reluctantly come to accept that as good corporate citizens they need to be more sensitive to environmental issues.

Curiously, metropolitan universities have appeared immune to many of these demands. Those calling for good citizenship on the part of business and industry rarely recognize that academic institutions are also corporate entities. As employers, owners and users of real estate, producers of waste and other forms of potential environmental pollution, and in other ways as well, metropolitan colleges and universities can have significant adverse consequences for their immediate environment.

There is much evidence that the presence and activities of metropolitan universities in an urban environment are not always benign. A recent study by a comprehensive projects class at the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles, found that their urban university contributes nearly fifteen thousand tons per year to the solid waste disposal

crisis in southern California, and generated more than a hundred tons of hazardous waste in 1988 alone. In 1987, according to the study, UCLA was identified as the tenth largest emitter of carbon monoxide in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The response of university administrators to these findings in many ways paralleled earlier responses of private corporations when their harmful impacts were discovered. "The data were faulty," "the researchers did not have all of the facts," "further study is needed" were typical statements initially released by the university officials. What ultimately proved to be indisputable is the fact that UCLA was, and still is, a major environmental polluter, and until recently had no formal mechanism in place to remedy the problems identified in the study. Indeed, as has often been the case with nonacademic corporations, only after "misdeeds" had been brought to the attention of the public did the university initiate ameliorative actions.

Other universities have also been accused of adversely affecting their surroundings. Community activists have long accused Columbia University in New York City and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles of "gentrifying" their immediate neighborhoods, effectively forcing low-income residents out of the area. These institutions have reasoned that providing a stable, safe environment is in their own best interest as well as that of their surrounding community, especially if the area thereby becomes more attractive and property values rise.

Yet many advocates and residents of low-income and minority communities have long looked with suspicion at the "expansion" efforts of college campuses, but have had neither the resources nor the political clout to do much about it. While the two examples cited may be isolated, they raise interesting questions about just what type of citizenship role educational institutions can and should be expected to play. At the very least, they should take the initiative in minimizing any adverse effect they have on their physical environment and on particular social and economic groups in the neighborhood. They should not wait to be forced into good corporate citizenship by external pressure.

But beyond avoiding adverse impact, metropolitan colleges and universities face, as well, the opportunity to exert a positive influence on their neighborhood, bringing about improvements without displacements. Occidental College in Los Angeles provides an interesting case study of an institution poised to rise to this challenge.

A College Ready to Meet the Challenge

Occidental College was founded in 1887, originally as Occidental University, as one of a group of educational institutions started amidst the economic boom years in southern California. Throughout the college's one hundred year history it has had close ties with wealthy landowners and well-connected business persons of the region. These relationships have been of great importance to the growth

of the college in terms of financial stability and endowments assets. The institution's most recent capital campaign raised 40 million dollars and was completed nearly eighteen months ahead of schedule.

Today, Occidental College is situated on a 120-acre site in Eagle Rock, a residential section of Los Angeles. A liberal arts institution with an enrollment of just under 1,700 students, a full-time faculty of 125, and endowment assets valued at \$145 million, the college is rated by a national news magazine as one of the top thirty liberal arts institutions in the United States. It is within the context of over one hundred years of success that one must examine Occidental's current attempts to define an effective corporate citizenship role for itself.

When John Brooks Slaughter became Occidental's twenty-fourth president in 1988, he launched an unprecedented effort to promote the benefits of the college's proximity to Los Angeles and to take a more active and visible role in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. Seeking to make Occidental a leader in its community, Slaughter encouraged the institution's faculty, staff, and students to become, as was reported recently in a local newspaper, "a pervasive presence in the community, working in local schools and business, volunteering with local organizations, and experiencing the wide range of cultures and lifestyles in Los Angeles."

Slaughter's initiative represents a sharp departure from the position the college had held in the past. Previous administrations steadfastly maintained that the mission of the college was primarily educational, its clientele national, and that therefore the college had no particular need to be actively involved in the local community.

President Slaughter has presented a different agenda for the college's future. In his inaugural address, he indicated that an educational institution cannot truly achieve great quality without inclusion of the diverse cultural richness reflective of the society in which that institution operates. In further setting out his agenda, Slaughter stated that Occidental College could achieve the preeminence that it sought only through a visible and active presence in its local community.

To facilitate his agenda, Slaughter in 1988 instituted an eighteen-month strategic planning process to focus on the external environment in which the college exists, assess the institution's internal character, identify a set of programmatic activities to be undertaken and their costs, and provide a means for the college to evaluate the effectiveness of its efforts. It remains to be seen what the ultimate outcome of this exercise will be. However, it is most likely that the strategic directions selected will alter the way in which the college has pursued its educational mission for the past one hundred years.

Shaping the Future of Occidental's Surrounding Community

The growing multi-ethnic population of the communities immediately surrounding Occidental College provides a number of opportunities to foster its mission of diversity. The changing ethnic composition

of the community provides an excellent arena in which to frame a multicultural curriculum. A quite different challenge is posed by the declining economic base and deteriorating physical conditions of the area. The college's assumption of a role in addressing these conditions could require extending its mission beyond traditionally accepted educational bounds.

For assistance in identifying these challenges, Occidental engaged students from the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning at UCLA to analyze changes occurring in the surrounding community. This analysis is intended to be the basis for a plan of action for linking the college more effectively with the community and for strengthening its ties to local residents, businesses, school administrators, and community-based organizations. Initial investigations indicated that, in turn, these constituencies were also interested in forging closer ties with the college. The study recommended two major strategies to initiate this process: neighborhood revitalization and investment in youth.

Physical Revitalization

Occidental College has long been viewed as an oasis. Its campus is nestled on a hillside well away from main thoroughfares. Even though the campus is located in a residential neighborhood, residents seldom have cause to enter the campus, and students infrequently venture into the neighborhood. When local merchants are asked for directions to the college, many cannot oblige because they have never been to the campus.

With respect to the college's immediate physical environment, the UCLA students identified four major issues. First is Occidental's appearance. The physical deterioration and economic disinvestment of its main access routes do not present a pleasing image for visitors. Second, there are virtually no student-oriented establishments on the commercial streets near the campus. If there were, students might leave the campus and increase their contact with an increasingly multi-ethnic neighborhood. Third, a noticeable shift is occurring in the vicinity, from single family residential units to more dense, multifamily units. The issue here is how to plan this new growth in a way that will support a vibrant commercial core and contribute to the physical character of a well-planned residential community. Finally, accessibility and visibility are problem areas. Poorly placed directional signs and the lack of clearly identifiable entrances to the campus along the college's main access routes confuse visitors.

To combat many of these problems the students recommended adoption of a revitalization strategy consisting of establishing (1) three new gateways; (2) a Community Development Corporation; (3) an Office of Community Planning.

Three new gateways. The proposed gateway concept is a physical design solution combined with a selective investment program broadly aimed at creating a sense of place and a vital residential and commer-

cial core. The specific objectives of this approach are to:

- establish Occidental's presence in the community;
- revitalize and upgrade the commercially zoned core directly adjacent to the college; and
- increase accessibility to the campus.

These objectives constitute a physical linkage strategy whereby Occidental promotes itself as an integral component of the community and provides assistance to struggling local merchants. Gateways are a traditional way of visibly identifying the boundary of an established community or neighborhood. In many instances such gateways have served as defensive measures to prevent outsiders from having access to a privileged community. But in other instances, gateways have served to announce arrival and welcome, and generally to include rather than to exclude the community.

Community Development Corporation. The students further recommended that a Community Development Corporation (CDC) be established to promote, direct, and oversee the physical and economic revitalization of the two major commercial streets directly adjacent to the college, as well as any future development activities occurring in the vicinity, such as future housing developments. Successful CDCs in other locations now finance and operate shopping centers, industrial parks, business "incubators," and retail franchises. They can also act as advocates for better municipal services and as challengers of local banks to increase their lending in poorer neighborhoods. The board of directors of the proposed CDC would consist of Occidental College administrators, trustees, local business persons, residents, and representatives of various neighborhood organizations. Initial capitalization of the CDC would come from the college. Other funding sources would include local businesses, foundations, and fund-raising efforts. Activities envisioned for the CDC include:

- identifying infrastructure improvements required to facilitate commercial revitalization and to improve the esthetic quality of the surrounding residential neighborhood;
- lobbying local officials to prevent the issuance of conditional use permits for land uses not compatible with a residential neighborhood, such as automobile repair shops;
- providing technical assistance to local businesses to increase their economic viability and expand their services;
- developing a retail theme including landscaping, sign regulations, and pedestrian-oriented amenities, so as to provide a unifying image for the revitalized commercial areas;
- assisting local businesses to abate building and safety code violations.

Specific Plan. The UCLA study also recommended that Occidental promote the development of a so-called Specific Plan that addresses the physical development needs of its surrounding community. Specific Plans are sets of detailed guidelines for the development of a

particular geographic area. Usually such plans are prepared by the Los Angeles City Planning Department. However, local sponsors such as Occidental College can underwrite the preparation of such a plan in conjunction with the city's Planning Department. A Specific Plan for the area would serve to ensure the quality of development and to make provisions for certain uses and amenities. With an adopted Specific Plan it would be possible for the college to work with the community in order to:

- create a design review board to approve new development proposals, ensuring that all new development would have to conform to a set of agreed-upon community guidelines;
- institute a moratorium on mini-mall and apartment development along the commercial corridors;
- institute zoning that increases pedestrian densities;
- prohibit new automobile-related uses and provide a phasing-out period of ten years for existing ones;
- encourage mixed residential/commercial use development and provide density bonuses for affordable housing.

Office of Community Planning and Land Use. The study conducted by the UCLA graduate students also recommended that the college become more knowledgeable about the changes in its immediate environment in order to be more effective in influencing public policy and planning decisions for the benefit of the community. A proposed Office of Community Planning and Land Use would provide technical support to the ongoing planning activities in the area sponsored by the city's Planning Department in which the college participates through a faculty representative. This office would take a leadership role by clearly identifying Occidental's interests and developing consistent policy positions regarding growth and development in the community. The office also would become an effective voice on behalf of the college in lobbying for a Specific Plan.

Investing in Youth

Economic and physical changes occurring in Occidental's surrounding community are accompanied by changes in the composition of the population. The number of minority households with children and youth has grown at rates faster than is occurring in the greater metropolitan area. And yet, the ability of local institutions to accommodate changes reflected by this growing number of minority youth has not kept pace. Nowhere is this more evident than in the local schools.

The second strategy proposed by the UCLA student project centers on Occidental playing a key role in developing a strong support network for the community's youth. Data were developed on youth-oriented crime, high school dropout rates, and substance abuse. On the surface it appears that only concern about crime and safety would be of immediate interest to the Occidental community. However, the

UCLA students contend that the extremely high dropout rates at local high schools, particularly among Latino students who constitute the majority of the student population, in the long run may hamper Occidental's efforts to recruit a qualified multi-ethnic student body. In the short term the educational achievement problems in local schools result in a large number of youths in the neighborhood, idle, and with few prospects for securing meaningful employment. The UCLA students argued that if Occidental has a goal to create the best multicultural education system of any liberal arts college in the country, it should include as part of this curriculum activities and outreach to strengthen the achievement levels of local youth. Such a strategy would relate community service to education.

Risks Taken and Lessons to Be Learned

Thrusting the college into a new "corporate leadership role" with regard to the well-being of its surrounding community is not without peril. The previous president of the college enjoyed over twenty years of success, in part because he specifically kept the institution from engaging in the type of activities that Slaughter wants to pursue. Indeed, a standing order of the Board of Trustees specifically prohibits Occidental College from becoming involved in social issues.

Currently there are mixed signals concerning the degree of consensus among board members with regard to Slaughter's views on the future role of the college. Although the board has been quite supportive of the new president's strategic planning activities, it is not certain what type of support he can expect to receive from board members when the need arises to finance new programmatic initiatives that come out of the planning process.

There is also the question of the strength of alumni support for many of the ideas being pursued. Yet such support, as of course also that of the board, is essential. The vision of corporate responsibility with regard to the surrounding community must be shared by a constituency broader than just faculty and students.

It also remains to be seen how the community itself will respond to Slaughter's initiatives. For the moment, homeowner groups support his new vision, in large part because the racial composition of the area is changing so rapidly. For the first time, elderly white homeowners find themselves in a residential neighborhood where they are in the minority. Conversion of single family residences to higher density apartment buildings has taken place at a rapid pace. Fears of crime and gang violence run high. Signs of economic difficulties as measured by boarded-up storefronts, and a proliferation of automobile repair shops indicate that the once-healthy residential character of Occidental's immediate neighborhood is undergoing change that ought to be reversed.

Last, but certainly not least, the current fiscal realities for both private and public institutions of higher education create an ever-growing need for high return on investment, more capital campaigns, and stronger annual fund raising. The obvious dilemma is the potential

conflict between the need for such financing and the adoption of an institutional mission of direct intervention in societal problems, which might be costly and reduce returns on investment in the short term.

Questions of this kind must be considered by any metropolitan college or university intending to become a better corporate citizen of its urban environment. The problems can be resolved with the proper vision and leadership on the part of the institution's head, as shown by Occidental's President Slaughter. If the college's new initiatives produce positive outcomes, its experience could provide a model for other metropolitan campuses.

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