

Thanks to the tireless efforts of its guest editor, Susan Fratkin, this issue of *Metropolitan Universities* brings you an interesting and useful collection of articles on the implications of telecommunication for our institutions. Some articles describe its use in collaborative programs linking schools and the university, others focus on the development of electronic networks, and some deal with continuing professional education for teachers, for physicians, and for engineers. One article provides a glimpse of the library of the future, in which emphasis is shifted from on-site collection to electronic access to distant materials. The article by Robert Wood on regional planning is not part of the issue's theme, but supplements it very well. To the discussions of technical modes of outreach, it adds a cogent description of a regional activity in which metropolitan universities should play a pivotal role.

Through all these contributions there runs a common theme: the modern university, and most particularly a metropolitan institution, must change its form in fundamental ways in order to provide the functions needed by society. The geographic range of its activities must reach well beyond the physical limits of the campus. That is hardly a new idea: it is central to the land-grant idea and was expressed by Wisconsin's President Van Hise almost a century ago when he said that the borders of the campus are the boundaries of the state. But what for many decades continued to be not only physically but also conceptually peripheral activities have now begun to pervade the core of our institutions. When contemporary presidents like George Johnson at George Mason speak of "the interactive university," they no longer refer to the need for some add-on activities by an Office of Continuing Education or an off-the-mainstream extension program. They conjure up a new vision of the metropolitan university, which in its entirety participates and contributes to a two-way flow of individuals, ideas, and information linking the institution and its region.

That vision was articulated in the very first issue of *Metropolitan Universities* in the article by Charles Hathaway, Paige Mulhollan, and Karen White. It is contained in the DECLARATION OF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITIES, which has appeared repeatedly in these pages, and it has been elaborated in every issue of the journal. Some issues dealt with the internal consequences of that interaction in terms of student diversity, curricular changes, and faculty challenges. Other issues, including the last two with the theme of regional development as well as the current one with its focus on telecommunication and the article by Wood, have described both targets and methodologies of outreach. All of this material, together with many articles slated to appear in future issues of this journal, is beginning to coalesce into a set of recognizable features of the interactive, metropolitan university and to delineate what Hathaway, Mulhollan, and White called an institutional model for the next century.

The need for such a model is becoming more apparent by the day. The warning cries raised by a few of us over the years are beginning to be heard and heeded more widely. A recent front page article in the *Chronicle*

of *Higher Education* described the growing realization of many academic administrators that the current fiscal trauma, affecting so many of our colleges and universities, is not a temporary crisis to be met by appropriate belt tightening. It heralds a long-term change in society's attitude toward higher education and its willingness to support it, and it calls for fundamental changes in the prevalent model and mode of operation of our institutions.

Metropolitan universities are making substantial progress in developing variants of the new interactive model in response to both short- and long-term needs of society. But such progress is, as yet, not adequately matched by progress toward equally necessary adaptations of institutional modes of operation. Some encouraging signs exist. The publication of Ernest Boyer's report *Scholarship Reconsidered* has substantially raised awareness and discourse regarding the need to broaden the definition of scholarship and to adapt both the system of values and rewards governing faculty status as well as the ways in which we prepare future members of the professoriat. The journal issue on "The New American Scholar" discussed some of these matters, and a subsequent issue on the topic has been scheduled. To date, however, little concrete change has taken place on our campuses.

Fundamental adaptation is needed, as well, in our modes of instruction which, at this time, are neither pedagogically nor financially effective. Can we teach both better and less expensively, or is that an inherent contradiction? Much is happening with regard to the use of computers in the classroom and even as a substitute for traditional, face-to-face instruction. A future issue of *Metropolitan Universities* will contain descriptions of some of the principal developments and assessments of their effectiveness and value to date. At this time it is still very difficult to assess the extent to which computers will succeed in bringing about fundamental and pervasive changes in our way of teaching—and indeed whether such changes, if brought about, will really be either pedagogically more effective, or more economical, or both, or neither.

The necessary reexamination of modes of instruction cannot be limited to the potential of the computer. Metropolitan universities, in particular, must take into account that they are characterized on the one hand by more mature students and, on the other hand, by a responsibility to help practitioners acquire and maintain their competence. They need to explore very different approaches to the current balance between didactic instruction and independent learning, and to find better ways to inculcate team work. Much greater attention is needed, as well, to the proper utilization of prior and concurrent experience, and to the development of a more practice-based epistemology.

The organization and administration of our institutions constitute a third dimension of necessary adaptation. It has, to date, received the least systematic attention, let alone concrete activity—except for the reactive changes triggered by drastic staff reductions. Crisis management rarely leads to truly cost- as well as function-effective reorganization. Basic rethinking of how we structure our institutions and how we manage them is needed not only in reaction to new fiscal realities, but also because now we are moving toward a new functional model, the idea of the interactive

university. The effectiveness of such a university is inhibited by traditional boundaries between disciplines, departments, and schools; between "regular" and continuing education; between full- and part-time student attendance (and perhaps between full- and part-time faculty); and even between credit and noncredit instruction. Questions need to be raised as well about our current bifurcation of *academic* and *student* affairs, and about the often duplicative organization of the latter. Even more fundamental are questions about the decision-making process and about how to combine an appropriate degree of administrative leadership and managerial control, the possible inclusion of new constituencies, and the essential participation of the faculty.

To mention these problem areas is easy; to conceptualize alternatives without introducing new barriers and new duplications is very difficult. It is a task which urgently requires attention. *Metropolitan Universities* can contribute to this process by publishing thoughtful and provocative articles on pertinent issues: we continue to issue a standing invitation for such contributions.

Marguerite Ross Barnett
1942–1992

The editors of *Metropolitan Universities* mourn the untimely death of Marguerite Ross Barnett, president of the University of Houston–University Park, a contributor to this journal and member of its Editorial Board. Dr. Barnett was a national leader in defining and furthering the role of metropolitan universities.