

- Now that the University of the Philippines needs a new President to succeed Mr. Carlos P. Romulo, this article could show some pointers in the way candidates for that position should be properly assessed and judged.

SELECTING A UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

The history of the office of president in American colleges and universities began with the election of Henry Dunster as chief officer of Harvard College in 1640. He received the title of president, which has become the usual title for the chief executive of American institutions of higher learning. Three other terms have been used to identify the executive head: rector, chancellor and provost.

As one reviews the history of the office of the college president, it is quite apparent that the selection of the person for this office is one of the crucial tasks of the board of trustees. It is important because the president automatically becomes the chief liaison between the board and the institution. The manner in which he executes his responsibility

will set the tone of the academic enterprise.

The board must be reminded that the role of the president is complex and multifaceted and needs clear definition before final selection of a candidate. The board of trustees should define the task of the president in light of the needs, objectives and philosophy of the institution. The board should also realize that a successful president of one institution is not automatically a successful president in another. The selection of a president must be carefully thought out and his appointment should only be made after every avenue and resource has been exhausted.

The relationship of the president to the board of trustees is an extremely crucial relationship. The president can establish a smooth line of communication or

build imaginary barriers that will create havoc in the academic confines. He is the chief representative of all avenues of the institution to the board of trustees, and this is a responsibility that cannot be ultimately delegated. The president must take full responsibility for the operation of the institution and see to it that he has the finest team to help him manage the affairs of a growing complex of higher learning.

One of the first tasks of the president should be to review the structure of the board of trustees and suggest ways of structuring the board so that trustees become involved to the maximum degree. Trustees need to be involved and the president can direct their involvement in a variety of ways. The president must also realize that the academic community has entrusted to him its professional hopes and aspirations for the institution.

The president, by virtue of his office, is the major decision-maker apart from the board of trustees. Though the president's role

is multitudinous and his work is multilateral, his opportunities for influence in decision-making are very broad. He is the power center for decisions, and he must be careful how he exerts that power.

Harold Stoke, in "The American College President," remarked regarding this power:

"...Those who enjoy it are not very successful and those who are successful are not very happy. The explanation is hidden somewhere in the philosophy of power. Those who enjoy exercising the power shouldn't have it, and those who should exercise it are not likely to enjoy it."

In arriving at decisions, the president has the responsibility to choose the course of action and direction deemed best from the alternatives of all the communities represented. The ability to make those decisions and implement them implies a trust vested in him by not only the trustees, but the faculty, staff, students and public as well. This trust given to him by his associates will either grow

or decline, based upon his method of operation in daily decision-making. His ability to accomplish things may depend to a great extent on that trust. He must remember that people will be led only to the degree that they want to be led. The President must inspire his associates to follow him or the institution will be steered on a shaky course.

One of the major roles of the president will be to submit information to the board concerning the total college program. Any presentation made by the president to the board of trustees must be based on sound, reasonable and rational foundations. The facts presented must merit consideration at the board level and controversial items must not be hidden because of fear of board reprisal. In my research regarding boards, I discovered that presidents have a tendency to shield board members from information that would cause dissatisfaction to the board. Trustee members need to know the truth if they are to make the most adequate decisions necessary for the

ongoing of an institution. If they cannot accept the responsibility of knowing these verities, then they are not fulfilling their function.

The nature of the role of the president and the role of trustees demands that they operate in an environment that brings cohesive union of major vectors of the institution. This does not imply that the two must agree in all areas touching their responsibility. It simply means that the president and the board, for the well-being of the institution, must be able to negotiate, facilitate, develop and lead on a priority level of good communication with one another. The problems of growth, by necessity, demand tension, difficulty and stress, yet they do not require division, disunity and disrespect to prevail.

I submit that the beginning of a great institution is the selection of a strong, flexible board of trustees which will appoint a top-level chief executive. If that chief executive is willing to do the job that needs to be done within the entire academic enterprise, which

includes maintaining the proper role with all communities of the institution, including his relationship with the board of trustees, the future of education is greatly enhanced. — *By Orley Herron, College and University Business, August, 1967.*

LISTEN AND LEARN

Dialogue is only possible when one is listening carefully to another without interrupting him, without thinking ahead about what one will reply when he pauses but concentrating on what he is saying when he is saying it. Dialogue occurs when the listener is truly attentive and not pretending to be God or an archangel. Then, when a pause does occur, he is ready to answer with a full understanding of the other's point of view. — *By Dorothy Goldberg in The Creative Woman*