

Presidential Address
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Past presidents have traditionally given an inspirational talk about the value of the liberal arts or have discussed challenges and opportunities facing us as deans. They have done an excellent job, but I thought I would have a different focus, and talk about CCAS as an organization. Some of us have been part of CCAS for many years, and others of you are experiencing your first meeting. This is my 10th annual meeting and I still consider myself a novice. So my talk will be a bit of a self-tutorial, and may have some inaccuracies which some of you will no doubt be happy to correct later.

Who are we?

The obvious answer is that CCAS is a national organization of deans, associate and assistant deans from a wide variety of arts and sciences colleges. (For brevity, I will just say deans) Among our smallest colleges is Wilson College, a liberal arts women's college with an enrollment of approximately 350. UW - Madison, along with other large, public research university members, is among the largest. My unit -- the College of Letters and Science B has an enrollment of about 21,000 students. These two examples give some idea of the breadth in size and mission of our member institutions.

CCAS was formed in the 60s by a group of liberal arts deans who were unhappy with the lack of interest shown in the liberal arts by the national land grant association, the National Association of State Universities and Land-grant Colleges (NASULGC).

I suppose that everyone knows the history of the land-grant act. The Morrill Act of 1862 gave grants of federal land to the states to set up universities. The requirement was that the university had to teach agriculture, engineering, and military tactics (after all, the act was passed during the Civil War). This history is still reflected in the interests of NASULGC, and that is why our predecessor deans were unhappy with the programs of the national meetings, which tended to cater to the interests of the agriculture and engineering deans. So, the story goes, at one meeting in the mid - 60s, a group of liberal arts deans marched out and held their own meeting at a nearby hotel. Thus began CCAS.

This history of our origins is still reflected in the makeup of CCAS. Using the about-to-be-replaced (by a totally useless) Carnegie classification, our membership of approximately 500 institutions consists of approximately 20% research I and II institutions; 17% doctoral I and II; 53% comprehensive I and II, and 10% baccalaureate

or liberal arts I and II. By comparison, the percentage of liberal arts colleges in the Carnegie classification is 30%, while the percentage of research universities (which tend to be land-grant institutions) is 7% of all the approximately 1,800 institutions included in the Carnegie classification scheme.

Thus, as an organization, we are over-represented by research universities and under-represented in liberal arts colleges. Put another way, 75% of the Research I institutions are members of CCAS, while only 12% of the Liberal Arts I institutions are.

This is not by design, but rather reflects our origins. Originally, a requirement for membership was public-institution status. Then the Bylaws were changed to welcome all baccalaureate institutions. The membership committee for the last several years at least has made a real effort to increase our membership among liberal arts colleges.

Let me review these numbers again:

*37% research (and doctoral) institutions;
53% comprehensive institutions; and
10% baccalaureate or liberal arts institutions.*

The dominant group is the comprehensive university group (which would include some of the urban universities) with 48% of the membership, but the great strength of CCAS is the diversity of the membership.

With all of this heterogeneity, where is the unity in CCAS? It is true we differ a lot in size, in scope, in financial resources, but I'd like to suggest that we are bound together by a common commitment to the liberal arts, which in our name -- CCAS -- we call the arts and sciences.

The term "liberal arts" is often misunderstood. For example, many believe that the liberal arts refer to the humanities and arts alone, excluding the social and natural sciences. I am often asked how I, a chemist, can be dean of a liberal arts college.

Another misconception about the liberal arts, particularly in today's occupation-oriented society, is that the liberal arts denote a particular lack of focus on and relevance to the world of work. Throughout their long history, the liberal arts in fact have been intensely practical. For the Greeks, they provided training to allow free people to become citizens. In the middle ages, they provided the basis for the priesthood. In the 19th century, the liberal arts provided the general education required for the law, medicine, and the ministry.

Today, the liberal arts are still closely related to general education leading to the professions, and yet they are more. Liberal arts graduates are found in nearly every major occupation, including leadership positions in government, education, business, and industry.

It has never been easy to characterize the liberal arts fully, because they have had many manifestations over their long history. Today, the term "liberal arts college" conjures up a picture of a small, private school, with a tree-shaded campus, ivy-covered buildings, and intense student-professor interactions. This is certainly an honored part of the picture. Another manifestation is the elite private Ivy League university such as Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. And yet a minority of liberal arts students are educated at such institutions. A larger group are educated instead at public institutions, many in liberal arts units embedded within a larger university.

What do these varieties of liberal arts college have in common? Certainly not size, nor student and faculty profiles, nor approaches to general education, nor administrative structure. But liberal arts colleges do share four common goals that form the thread that links our diverse institutions together in CCAS. They are:

Education of the complete person. A hallmark of a liberal arts education is breadth of study spanning the humanities, social sciences, biological sciences, and physical sciences. A concomitant goal is an integrated understanding that allows the educated person to be able to receive new information and experiences and place them in an understandable context. The ability to distinguish fact from fiction and the significant from the insignificant is an essential trait of the liberal arts graduate. A liberal education must therefore teach and encourage critical thinking and cogent communication.

Education for citizenship. The Jeffersonian ideal of a liberal education is that it enables the citizens to choose from among themselves leaders best able to serve the democracy. This is also a key element of the land-grant tradition: education in service to the state. In addition, the liberal arts education must prepare students to understand with sophistication both a technological world and a world with rapidly changing economic as well as national boundaries. Graduating college students face a chaotic world that has lost its grounding in a shared sense of social and political order and values. A liberal arts education must help its graduates develop the skills, values, and attitudes to play influential roles in this world.

Education for a productive life. One important aspect of a productive life is a person's choice of jobs and careers, and a liberal arts education should attend to these practical aspirations of students. At the same time, a productive life is not always one that is constrained to a single path; many workers will change jobs and even careers several times during their lifetime. A liberal arts education must prepare students for their third job as well as their first. Further, a broad liberal arts education prepares the graduate for a meaningful life outside of a formal work setting, with activities ranging from the arts to volunteer community service to living within a community of people similar to and different from the graduate.

Education for life-long learning. This aspect of a liberal education is dearest to the hearts of the faculty and to many students and graduates: the joy of learning to satisfy human curiosity even if the practical consequences cannot be predicted, the ecstasy of discovering for oneself truth and beauty. In today's practical, bottom-line oriented world,

this often appears to be a luxury that universities can dispense with. But this short-sighted view ignores history: many of the ideas and devices that shape the practical world of today had their origins in a love of learning for its own sake. Can we afford to rob future generations of a legacy that our generation is so dependent upon? Education for the love of learning itself is the cornerstone of the liberal arts.

Thus, one answer to “who are we?” is that we are a very diverse organization that shares the common ideal of the liberal arts.

Why are we?

Turning now to the question, why are we?, the informal motto of CCAS is Deans helping other deans to dean. That is, we are a volunteer professional organization whose principal purpose is internal, that is, we focus on helping each other do our jobs better.

Volunteer Organization

Let me first talk about CCAS as a volunteer organization. Someone has characterized a college or university as fundamentally a volunteer organization. Oh, please Professor Smith, if its not too much trouble, could you please come to the committee meeting on Wednesday afternoon? This contrasts with the business model: Smith, be there or be gone!

As you might imagine, there is scholarship being done about the nature of volunteer organizations. The most critical thing, obviously, about volunteers is that you don't have the obvious hold on them that you have over people you pay. Volunteers can quit at any time if they aren't happy. So it is much more important to think about the other rewards they get.

There is a group of people that include Mark Snyder from the University of Minnesota who has been studying volunteer motivation for some time now. They have come up with six kinds of motivation:

to express values

to enjoy social relationship

to advance careers

to relieve guilt

to increase understanding and knowledge

to engage in worthwhile endeavors

They show that if a volunteer is matched with a volunteer setting in which his/her motives can be well satisfied, the volunteer is happier and more likely to stay. I think this is a useful characterization that applies well to CCAS.

There is nothing wrong with being a volunteer organization - our society would fall apart without them. But volunteer organizations have definite characteristics. One is that they

typically seem like a club or clique to a newcomer. The more established members seem to know what is going on and how to accomplish things, but the newcomer usually finds out slowly by trial and error. This suggests to me that in future meeting, we might want to have an introductory session on CCAS itself.

Another characteristic feature of a volunteer organization is that most of the work is done by a minority of the members. Hopefully this happens because members join with a variety of motivations and intentions. Some of us like working in large organizations to make things happen, and others of us simply want to (or just have the time to) benefit from the work that others do. This is the way it should be; we would certainly dissolve into total chaos if everyone wanted to have a high level of involvement. Nevertheless, we should always be vigilant to be sure that the members who want to contribute can find a suitable avenue.

Participation in national meetings and workshops

So, how can one contribute? One way is by showing up both at the national meeting and at workshops that interest you. You can also encourage associate and assistant deans, and department chairs, to attend CCAS workshops. Another way is to join our listserve and contribute your ideas electronically.

Going beyond that, another way to contribute is to propose topics for panel sessions during the national meeting -- or to contribute to a panel when someone asks. This actually gets to be a bit competitive, since we typically have more than twice as many proposals as we have slots on the program. This is good, since it improves the content of the meeting. But the downside for a volunteer organization is that people can get their feelings hurt. As deans, we are used to success -- having our ideas greeted with respect (at least outwardly!) So we don't appreciate it when our peers turn down one of our great ideas for a panel. This is why it is important to have a representative Board and Program Committee to assist the Vice President in planning the annual meeting.

Participation in standing and ad hoc committees

Another way to contribute is by serving on one of the standing committees of CCAS. Let your interests be known. The standing committees have an automatic place on the program of the annual meeting.

In addition to standing committees, we also have ad hoc committees. A proposed by-law change to be described at this afternoon's business meeting addresses the issue of how long an ad hoc committee should be continued, and whether ad hoc committees have an automatic right to a place on the program of the annual meeting. The proposal is to allow ad hoc committees to compete with everyone else for a slot at the annual meeting.

Participation in workshops

Still another way is to express an interest in being a presenter at a CCAS workshop. CCAS sponsors two types of workshops -- standard and ad hoc. The standard workshops are for new department chairs, new deans, and established deans. The ad hoc workshops change from time to time. This year they were on fiscal issues, marketing and the media, and teacher preparation. There is a director of each the dean's seminars and a set of decanal facilitators. This is another opportunity for service.

Another way you can support CCAS is by attending these workshops, or sending others from your institutions who would benefit. Workshops give new ideas, reaffirm old ones, and renew a sense of purpose and mission to our jobs.

I ask only that you do not vote by lack of attendance. If you do not find the topics interesting or the workshops helpful, please let the seminar director, Ernie Peck, or one of the officers know how you think the seminar can be improved.

We have a very limited capacity to do ad hoc seminars because of the size of our staff and our always-precarious finances. It is also important to rotate leadership of seminars among the membership so that more have the opportunity to participate. Finally, we should resist the temptation to make ad hoc seminars permanent, thereby closing off the opportunity to do new ones in the future.

Serving on the Board of Directors

Another way to serve is to be on the Board of Directors. The slate of candidates to be voted on at the business session this afternoon was constructed by the nominations committee to reflect experience in CCAS and to represent the diversity of our members. The officers are also members of the Board.

CCAS as a professional organization

Turning now to the issues of our nature as a professional organization whose principal purpose is on helping each other do our jobs better. Let's deal with the restricted scope of this mission.

The by-law review committee, whose report will be considered at the business meeting this afternoon, confirms that we are not a lobbying organization, and we do not espouse causes. One of the reasons for this, of course, is the diversity of our membership. It would be difficult indeed B this is not to say we haven't tried B to find a consistent set of issues on which we could all agree. It is true that we have had a task force on the national agenda for the past several years, but despite the efforts of some very talented and dedicated deans we have not made much progress.

That is not to say that there are not issues that seem to be likely candidates. These topics show up at our annual meetings with regularity: the liberal arts contribution to teacher education, internationalizing the curriculum, diversifying the faculty and student body, science and mathematics education are all obvious candidates.

Two factors, in my opinion, have always stalled our progress, however. One is the fact that there are other, related organizations that have one or more of these issues on their agendas. Where is the value added for CCAS to mount an independent effort? Then, why not partner with these other organizations? This is the second barrier to our progress as an advocacy organization: we are a volunteer organization.

We squeeze time for CCAS business out of our regular duties as deans. It is hard to maintain continuity. And, we are a fairly transient bunch. Some of us move up, and some of us move out. But we can't be counted on day in and day out. Add to that the fact that we do not have a large financial base. We have a minuscule, but terrifically efficient and dedicated professional staff B just a part-time director, an administrative assistant, and part-time graduate student help. It is clear that we are not set up to have a big national advocacy impact, despite our potential for doing so.

The small size of our national office also makes it very difficult for us to form alliances with other organizations that have related goals. Alliances offer obvious advantages, but those of us who are involved with alliances at home know that they do take time and nurturing and a certain amount of expense. We simply do not have the resources -- fiscal or human -- to form a lot of alliances.

Thus, I do not believe that there is a bigger spot in the national sun for CCAS. I believe instead in our primary purpose, because we can all learn from each other. Let diversity be our strength.

Some will say that our annual meeting is not balanced because there are too many sessions for institutions that are not like their own. This is inevitable, and I think we are doing our job well when we receive similar complaints from all points on the spectrum. It is true that large research universities seem more likely to provide our president. This is not for lack of trying to find others to serve this role, but frankly, a dean of a large unit has a lot more flexibility of schedule, budget, and effort than the dean of a small unit. One thing you may not realize is that it does cost extra to be a Board member or an officer in CCAS. I'm not complaining in the slightest, but I am giving you one reason why it is sometimes difficult to find Board members and officers from smaller institutions.

In this regard, I am amazed at the grace with which Beate Schiwiek served as president while dean at Felican B a college with an enrollment of less than one thousand. So I encourage everyone to consider yourselves as a possible member of the Board and officer of CCAS.

Where are we going?

Turning now to the question: Where are we going? I don't know, so this will be the shortest part of the talk.

There is the story of the dean who came rushing into a room where he mistakenly thought the faculty were meeting. Not finding them there, he cried out in a panic: Where are they? Where did they go? I'm their leader and I have to get out in front!

The by-laws review committee considered the question of whether we should establish a permanent long-range planning committee. In their wisdom, they recommend, but leave open the opportunity for some future president to appoint an ad hoc long-range planning committee.

So the best current answer to the question of where we are going is to look at the annual meeting agenda. This reflects the current interests of the membership. In the meeting we've been treated to topics such as:

diversity and affirmative action
extramural funding of the arts and sciences
faculty professional development
professional development of deans
general education
teacher education
information technology
fund raising
issues of the standing committees

I personally am quite comfortable with CCAS staying the course -- remaining an organization of deans helping deans. This means CCAS will continue to be responsive to the needs of its members, and for me, that's challenge enough, thank you very much.