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International Association of University Presidents (IAUP)

Note1: To meet UNESCO publishing standards, some editing of papers has been required.

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International Association of University Presidents (IAUP)

**Speech of Dr Donald R. Gerth
President of the International Association of University Presidents
President of the California State University, Sacramento**

Mr President, Mr Director-General, Excellencies, Heads of Delegations, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today in this setting of collaboration and concern for the future it is my privilege to speak with you from the point of view of the International Association of University Presidents about work among the students and universities of the world, and a sense of where the leaders of the universities of the world see higher education for the years ahead.

The International Association of University Presidents is an organization of some 700 member university rectors, vice chancellors, principals, and presidents from every continent and almost every nation in the world. It is an association which embraces the diversity of universities in the world as well as the diversity among students and of faculty. It is an organization which has a substantive program supporting universities and their changing roles and their leaders. These substantive programmes are of wide and varying natures, and include such activities as an experimental world wide program linking classes in a common subject with agreed upon texts and curriculum (think of a multi-sectioned course with sections of the course in 14 nations at 14 universities) through telecommunications and technology, a series of conference seminars (now numbering seven) on Higher Education and Human Resource Development in the Pacific Basin, and a highly successful Commission on Disarmament Education, Peace, and Conflict Resolution.

The leadership of IAUP moves over the world every three years. The leadership which began this decade was in Latin American, my immediate predecessors were in Japan, my successor is from Denmark, and soon we will be able to announce the leadership being nominated for the term 2002-2005 from yet another area of the world.

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Today I wish to discuss with you five dimensions of the function and role of university education in the twenty-first century. They are inter-related, and together make a tapestry. These dimensions are a knowledge based society; technology and the uses of information; access and cultural diversity; cooperation, competition, and the globalization of higher education; and the socioeconomic role of the universities. In the interest of time, I shall focus only on two very briefly. Surely there are other dimensions of universities that are central in our time, such as the financing and economics of universities, but these five topics relate each to the other and to the central theme and purpose of this conference.

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Over time the wealth of nations and societies has been defined by natural resources and industrial production capacity, factors which lead to a strong economy and thus a decent standard of living for most. We are now moving rapidly into a different kind of world, a world where the wealth of a nation is defined by the educational level of its people.

A knowledge based society is a society where the educational level of people establishes a base for economic, cultural, and social development. The economy of a knowledge based society is one characterized by advanced and sophisticated technology. The occupations and careers in a knowledge based society require in great measure some or much higher education, education beyond the secondary level. The professions require, almost without exception, substantial advanced higher education. Virtually all careers are characterized by major changes which require continuing education.

The cultural life and social conditions of a knowledge based society are characterized by a richness and civility known in previous times only to an elite few individuals.

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The telecommunications-technological revolution is the single greatest material factor impacting the work of universities in the late twentieth century.

Consider: technology makes possible the student to take much greater direction over her or his own learning; technology makes possible a major and lasting change in faculty roles, creating the possibility that a faculty member can be a mentor and guide for students and not principally an information giver; technology makes possible meaningful and inter-active distance learning; technology makes possible the direct and interactive linking of universities, the teaching of courses on multiple university campuses around the world either synchronously or asynchronously.

In the fall of 1995, the International Association of University Presidents sponsored a worldwide course at the upper division level in economics. "Sections" of the course were taught on fourteen campuses in almost as many countries. The course had a common text and a common language. Each "section" on a different campus had its own instructor who assigned grades and additional readings and conducted discussion sessions with students. The students and faculty all communicated, some several hundred, by e-mail asynchronously. E-mail was the best vehicle for this experiment because it was adaptable to asynchronous use and had no constraints of time zones. The experiment, leading up to the 1996 XIth Triennial Conference of the International Association of University Presidents, was carefully and comprehensively evaluated by an independent team from an institution not participating in the project. Students and faculty alike found the experiment to be an enriching experience, not only because of the multi-national communication in learning and teaching, but because students for the most part found themselves taking responsibility for a greater measure of their learning than in conventional teaching-learning.

The uses of technology are certainly to change roles of faculty, of students, and of the universities themselves. The international knowledge enterprise is now becoming a directly and instantly collaborative one, from the standpoint of research and teaching alike. Universities have always had an important role to play in economic development--though often we have not wished to acknowledge that role--and in the formation and understanding of public policy. Those roles will not only be enhanced but they will be shared across regional and national links.

So the information age is going well beyond technology simply making information more available - it is changing the ways in which people and institutions related to each other. It is conquering distance and time.

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That access to our universities is a major priority and that our universities over the world are becoming more culturally diverse should be no surprise in any society. For the most part, neither access nor cultural diversity are easily accomplished in universities.

We have historically understood education as a public good, and therefore deserving of support and receiving that support significantly from the public and quasi-public sectors. Now, just as the need to broaden access to higher education is greater than ever before, public financial support is shifting. That leads to another topic. But access, broad-based access to universities, is an imperative in every nation. This means building universities, perhaps expanding some universities, and most certainly the use of technology and telecommunications. Tradition resists this change often, but tradition must give way to a new reality that can be addressed with proven quality. There have been sufficient "experiments" for us to know that access can be made a reality, with quality, and the university community needs to address this, not just the governmental or business communities.

Very few nations, in today's world, have homogeneous populations in terms of ethnicity and culture. And few universities are models of diversity. This can be expected, for universities are ultimately the creations of societies, though those of us in universities often think and act otherwise. Population diversity can be expected to increase everywhere in the twenty-first century for reasons of economics, culture, transportation patterns, and the like. Cultural diversity is becoming a way of life in most countries, and thus it must become a way of life in our universities.

Universities in the twenty-first century cannot and will not survive in good health without embracing cultural diversity broadly within their student bodies, faculties, and curricula. Every social and economic indicator tells us that, and no nation, mine included, is exempt from this imperative.

The internationalization of higher education has to do with the things that many of us have come to regard as customary in the work of a good and healthy university: faculty and student exchanges; internationalizing the curriculum in the sense of instruction; achievement of student competence in languages other than those of the country where the university is located; sister institution arrangements, cooperation agreements signed; research and creative activities related to other countries and often located there; and the like.

Globalization has to do with a simply stated fact: universities now do their work in a global marketplace, and globalization encompasses the rich variety of things we think of as internationalization and then more.

Universities, to put it directly, no longer can anticipate enjoying a monopolistic marketplace based on geography. Students generally, not just students from wealthy families, can "go away" to a university and never leave home. To be sure, the character of the educational experience will be different from that which has been traditional, but there is mounting evidence that the intellectual experience can be rich when students let or cause that to happen.

As a result of globalization, we are witnessing the beginning of a new measure of competition among universities. That can be healthy and contribute to the quality of learning, and for the most part it will be.

Globalization also makes possible new levels of collaboration, in research, in teaching, and in the establishment of joint programs across national boundary lines. We have before us the opportunity to create environments on campuses that will bring opportunities to students and faculty and that include a supportive infrastructure so that students and faculty and institutions can take maximum advantage of an interdependent world and of the global dimensions of universities in the years ahead.

Globalization is the integration of broad segments of a country's economy, public policy, and culture with other nations. It is not simple. Recently economic experiences make clear that globalization and interdependence go hand in hand.

The opportunities for unhealthy competition among universities are now becoming apparent. Technology makes the point. But similarly, the opportunities for cooperation are just as apparent, and just as real. We can cooperate on research, on instruction, on bringing an intellectual vitality from our diverse cultures and economics and social orders to all of the work of universities.

Globalization and cooperation can go hand in hand to enlarge the historic role of universities in the world. IAUP has proposed a collaborative effort to address both cooperation and competition.

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Universities have always had a socio-economic role. Those of us in universities have sometimes denied this, and asserted that we address the true, the good, and the beautiful. But the behaviour of countless regimes through history to today affirms the socio-economic role of universities. So the significant question for those of us in universities is now to define and use that role.

All of the indicators we have been discussing today suggest that in a knowledge based society universities will have a central role to play, unless we abdicate that role and leave it to others. History teaches us that societies abhor vacuums and fill vacuums.

In the past nine years, with the good support of UNESCO and the highly successful IAUP/United Nations Commission on Disarmament Education, Peace, and Conflict Resolution, curriculum and programs about peace and conflict resolution have been developed over selected universities in the world. Now we anticipate a new partnership with UNESCO for the year 2000, the Year of Peace. Surely universities which have always taught and researched about war have something important to say about peace, which has to be more than the absence of war and conflict.

The point of these remarks is to give you a flavour of what the International Association of University Presidents is all about.

I can pledge to you that the member university presidents of IAUP will do two things after the conclusion of this World Conference on Higher Education. University presidents and their organizations will pay close

attention to the results of this World Conference, and will do something about these results. We will move on them. And member presidents will continue to bring strong and vigorous leadership to their universities and to their nations and regions.

Thank you.