

WELCOMING REMARKS

It is a genuine pleasure to welcome you to this first national conference sponsored by the Reinvention Center at Stony Brook. I am pleased to report that there are 400 people gathered here. Participants include faculty, administrative officials, professional staff, and graduate students from 101 research universities from 40 states plus Puerto Rico and representatives from eleven professional societies, government agencies and private foundations. Among the universities represented, 74 are public and 27, private--consistent with their numbers in the total research university population. This is quite impressive and reflects both the widespread and high level of interest in undergraduate education that now exists on research university campuses and in agencies and organizations whose support is crucial. A lot is happening, and it is not confined to any particular group of research universities or to any region, but is really quite pervasive.

I would like to thank the conference co-sponsors, the Association of American Universities Sigma Xi and The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, for their support and in particular want to single out the National Science Foundation whose funding has enabled us to encourage participation of teams from individual campuses and participation of graduate students.

The Reinvention Center was established 2 1/2 years ago, as an outgrowth of the Boyer Commission Report, *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Universities*. The Report offered a vision of what undergraduate education *ought* to look like at research universities, given their unique assets and scope and the opportunities they afford, and it called upon research universities to re-conceive their undergraduate education in ways that take advantage of these assets and impact significant numbers of students.

When it was published, the Report generated considerable discussion and controversy. While many applauded it, others questioned its basic assumptions or argued that its recommendations were impractical. There was, however, general agreement that the Report had accomplished two important goals. First, it called attention to undergraduate education at research universities; this was something that had not been high on the agenda of many campuses. Equally important, by putting forth *research* as a catalyzer, as an integrating and driving force *and*, as a goal for undergraduate education, it provided a much-needed focus and direction for individual campuses. In a fairly short period of time, the Report became a reference point both within and outside the academy for further discussion and for efforts at reform.

The challenge is how to effect reformation or transformation of current practices. For most of us working at a research university, the connections between research and graduate education are self-evident. The difficulty is in understanding how undergraduate education fits in, and once that understanding is achieved, how we can translate it into the classroom, as well as the lab or studio or library, --given research universities= size, traditions, multiple missions, and the heterogeneity of their students. Whether we come from public or private institutions, small or large, we are all grappling with similar questions.

The Reinvention Center was established to provide a focus and structure for research universities to address the most pervasive questions and challenges. Its mission is to stimulate discussions across campuses, enable institutions to share experiences and learn from one another, and, going beyond the Boyer Commission Report, to promote actions that will lead to the kind of paradigm shifts, or reinventions that the Boyer Commission advocated and that are now taking place on many campuses. The Center's approach in these 2 1/2 years has been to foster collective conversations, actions and research. Most of the conversations thus far have taken place through regional networks that the Center has formed. These are made up of research university faculty, administrators, and professional staff who together address fundamental systemic institutional challenges. Within the next 2-3 years, the Center proposes to establish parallel Disciplinary and Resource Networks. The Disciplinary Networks will attend to curricular and professional issues specific to a discipline and will be directed at departments—the units which deliver undergraduate education and are most critical to change. The Resource networks will be directed at those who are responsible for activities and services that support and enhance undergraduate education.

Thus, rather than being a Center in the traditional sense, the Reinvention Center is really a hub for an interlocking systems of networks that each focus on a key aspect of undergraduate education. Since the network members all come from institutions that share common values, engage in common practices and face common challenges, they comprise a community of perspectives that provides a solid basis for discussion and collective action relating both to the research university context and to the members' own distinctive professional needs.

This conference is the first product of this collective approach. The theme, "Undergraduate Research and Scholarship and the Mission of the Research Universities," emerged as a priority at the regional network meetings. These meetings were attended by well over 200 individuals from 85 public and private research universities. Others contributed as well through communications to the Center. It is significant that although different individuals and groups attended the meetings in different regions, participants at all the meetings came to focus on one central issue: the need for research universities to define and articulate the unique undergraduate education they can provide that builds on their strengths and is infused with same emphasis on the creation of knowledge that epitomizes their research activities and their graduate education. The conference program, including determining the subjects for the various sessions and identifying the individuals who are serving as speakers, panelists, and breakout session leaders, reflects the considerable input of the many who participated in the regional network meetings. I thank you all.