

TULANE UNIVERSITY

The Graduate School

NEW ORLEANS 18

Office of the Dean

June 28, 1950

Director George M. Sparks
Atlanta Division, University of Georgia
24 Ivy Street, South East
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Director Sparks:

I am sending you my report on the visit to the Atlanta Division, June 21 and 22. Copies are also going to Dean Hulsey and Chancellor Caldwell.

The visit was a most interesting experience indeed. Let me thank you for the invitation, and for your several courtesies and hospitality. I hope I have made clear that in my opinion the Atlanta Division has an enormous opportunity ahead of it. Just how to set it up is, as you know far better than I, quite baffling. If my report has not been completely complimentary on all matters, you will, I know, understand that I am giving an honest, if misguided opinion.

Sincerely yours,

Roger P. McCutcheon

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Dean

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Report of a Visit
to the
Atlanta Division of the University of Georgia
June 21 and 22, 1950

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Submitted by

Roger P. McCutcheon

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New Orleans, Louisiana

June 28, 1950

Report of a Visit to the Atlanta Division of the University of Georgia 1.

The invitation from Director Sparks to visit the Atlanta Division reached me, by good fortune, when I was in Atlanta for a committee meeting of the Board of Control for Southern Regional Education. It was thus possible for me to prolong my visit and spend Wednesday and Thursday, June 21 and 22, looking over the Atlanta Division.

A visitor to the Atlanta Division finds himself in a novel if not unique institution, which cannot be rated by the ordinary academic yardsticks. This institution must be judged in the light of its history, its purpose, its opportunity, and perhaps most of all its director. Under the extremely capable promotion of Dr. Sparks, the Division has grown notably in numbers and in financial strength. His twenty years of close personal guidance have given him an unusually wide number of important contacts in Atlanta and elsewhere in the state. His interest has been in providing educational opportunities for those who, for whatever reasons, find it impractical or impossible to attend college elsewhere. An enterprise which began with a few courses for part-time students taking their work at night has now expanded far beyond the original limits or purposes. It has grown much more rapidly than the City of Atlanta. It has now so large a proportion of full-time students in its day courses that it can no longer be judged as an evening college in which the main function is adult and part-time education. Yet a very important part of its function will properly remain that of an evening college. The degree to which practices and standards appropriate to an evening college still dominate the work of the day college is of course an important question.

In this connection it may be mentioned that in addition to my professional experience as a university professor and dean of a graduate school, I have taught in night divisions, and for four years was director of the evening college at Tulane. Many of the special problems at the Atlanta Division were therefore already somewhat familiar to me.

Another important factor in any evaluation of the Atlanta Division is the present affiliation with the University of Georgia. This is now in its third year. In general, the departments of the Atlanta Division are under the theoretical control of the University of Georgia. The director of admissions and the dean function, in theory, as part of the administration of the University of Georgia. Some comments on this relationship will be made later.

As I understood it, my main purpose as a visitor to the Atlanta Division was to report my impressions on the academic quality of the work, and to comment on the general problem of accreditation for the Division as a four-year college granting the A. B. degree. I therefore made no attempt to estimate the work of the College of Business Administration. As this is now the only field in which a student may earn a degree in the Atlanta Division, it is obviously very important to have it appraised, since the

Southern Association will not approve an institution any part of which has failed to gain approval from its accrediting agency. There is a national accrediting agency for colleges of business administration. Before any decisions are reached about the future of the Atlanta Division, it is imperative that this phase of the Atlanta Division be appraised by the appropriate agency.

The work in art, music, and education, including nursing education, was also, I thought, out of my province. I made no effort at a separate appraisal of the day and night courses leading to the A. B., on the conviction that if the Division could establish sound courses in its day work, the upgrading of the part-time and night work would follow in due course.

In the course of my visit I talked to most department heads and several other faculty members, to the dean, to the director of admissions, to the registrar, and had several discussions with the director. My questions in a typical faculty interview were, roughly, these: Where did you do your undergraduate and graduate work? Have you the Ph. D. degree? Had you taught in a liberal arts college before coming here? Do you have sufficient space, equipment, books, etc., to offer your work as you think it should be done? Are you satisfied with the quality of the students? How do they compare with students you have taught elsewhere? Do you note any significant differences between your day and night students? Is any encouragement given to your professional growth, such as travel allowances for professional meetings, funds for research, etc.? What would your department need to enable it to offer good senior college work? In your opinion, what are the best departments in the Division at present? What changes would you like to see in administration? Has the recent affiliation with the University of Georgia been a help? A hindrance? How? What future do you see for your department and for the Division?

With only one or two exceptions, everyone talked frankly and openly. There is, I believe, an unusual faculty loyalty to the institution, and a firm belief that it can have a much more important function than it now has. There is a warm and universal appreciation of the personal qualities of Dr. Sparks, of the great work he has done in building up the Division, coupled at times with the suggestion that his academic leadership has not always been on the same level with his ability as a promoter.

In the pages that follow I give my impressions of (1) the physical plant and equipment, (2) departmental offerings and faculty strength, (3) affiliation with the University of Georgia, (4) the administration, and conclude with a series of observations and suggestions.

PHYSICAL PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

As to the present building, it can fairly be described as adequate but not lovely. There is space, and it is well utilized; but there is little dignity or beauty. The general impression is that of a factory or industry rather than of a college. At present, administrative officers such as the registrar, the director of admissions, and the dean, have no private offices in which personal interviews or conferences can be held. The secretaries have their typewriters in the same office with their chiefs. But everybody understands that the present building is a temporary home only.

Just here let me emphasize one point which is widely applicable: the decision as to the future of the Atlanta Division cannot well be postponed much longer. If it is to remain what it now is, a junior college offering some third-year college work, the new building should be planned with that function in mind. If it is to become a senior college, then classroom space, library, laboratory, and office space must be planned with that function in view.

The library is better than a junior college would need, and yet not good enough for a senior college. The library is now binding some journals which hardly deserve it (Coronet, for instance) and is not subscribing to the professional journals which a senior college faculty should have available. Even for the strongest departments, such as history, English, psychology, and modern languages, there are no files for most of the professional journals, and for the few that are available the bound sets begin about 1947. There is at present no faculty library committee.

In the laboratory sciences there are, in the opinion of the faculty, fairly adequate facilities for the levels of work now being offered. Some departments do not have sufficient laboratory space. There is money for new equipment, and complete generosity from the administration.

DEPARTMENTAL OFFERINGS AND FACULTY STRENGTH

The departmental offerings are on the whole well planned, and seem adequate for the present student needs. All departments, however, will need considerable strengthening if they are to go to senior college status. My impression is that history, modern languages, English, and psychology could somewhat easily be made quite capable of senior college work. To be sure, there is at present no laboratory for psychology, and no one on the staff is trained for work in experimental psychology.

The number of students permitted in a section might well be lowered, the statistics I examined showed that the Freshman English sections have well over thirty. Though this number is within the limit proposed by the standards of the Southern Association, it is not ideal, to say the least.

The science departments, however, are at present doing only first and second year level work, and would need very great assistance before a program leading to the B. S. degree could be wisely instituted. They can be somewhat easily strengthened to the point of giving adequate support in an A. B. program.

The present faculty is considerably better than that required for junior college level work only. There is a good proportion of Ph. D. holders. Most of the faculty are experienced, and seem happy in their jobs. There are a few whose academic and personal attainments are too slender for their responsibilities, but all faculties have such misfits. There has been some attempt in the past to push weak faculty members from one department to another, rather than to drop them. This too is not unknown in academic procedure, but is still deplorable.

The present faculty is a teaching faculty only. There is little research or writing being done. Not many of the faculty attend professional meetings, and fewer still ever prepare and read scholarly papers. In short, there must be an important change in administrative attitude and emphasis to upgrade the present faculty to the level of a good four-year college.

AFFILIATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

The present affiliation with the University of Georgia has, in the opinion of the overwhelming majority I talked with, been very advantageous. The somewhat remote controls over departmental operations have resulted in scholastic and academic improvements of very great value. The departmental course offerings parallel, as far as they now go, those at Athens. The selection of new faculty personnel has been greatly improved, the academic training of new faculty people being now scrutinized much more carefully than in the past. The academic standards of the Atlanta Division and the University of Georgia seem to have been brought into close conformity, to judge from a report on the grade averages of the two institutions. There has been no serious departmental interference from Athens. There has been, it is true, some failure on the part of the University to understand the basic problems of adult education, to appreciate the ambitions of adults who want to learn something, and to encourage course offerings aimed at such a college population. This reluctance probably comes from a basic wish to protect academic standards. My own experience leads me to the conviction that it is possible to provide suitable courses for adults who want part-time work without sacrificing standards.

In one or two instances, regret was expressed that it was no longer possible to arrange a degree program under the convenient caption of the Bachelor of Commercial Science. I gather that before the affiliation with Athens, students at the Atlanta Division could, within the framework of the B. C. S. degree, take major work in the social studies, education, English, and the like, about as freely as if they had been working for the A. B. degree. I can see how useful such an arrangement could be, but at best it was a subterfuge, and would have been readily discovered as such by any accrediting committee.

Some faculty people expressed a concern lest, if the affiliation with the University of Georgia should be given up, there would be a prompt return to the casual and convenient academic standards for which the Atlanta Division was widely and unfavorably known. This is of course a very important point, and should be kept in mind.

ADMINISTRATION

Since the appointment of the present director of admissions, the admissions office has been functioning capably and sensibly. I was informed that before this office was created there was little scrutiny of the records presented by applicants, and that many were admitted who had been denied readmission to other colleges in the region because of academic failures. If this information is correct, the improvement in this office is considerable, important, and long overdue. The admissions officer is in charge of transfer credit and advanced standing, and does a good deal of student counseling.

Registration is completely in the hands of the registrar's office. Little or no use is made of the faculty as departmental advisors at registration. This system has the obvious advantage of speeding up the registration routine; it also encourages such errors as putting freshmen in sophomore classes for which they have not completed the prerequisites. Such errors can take place under any system, of course. However, the departments now feel that their advice could often be wisely utilized, and that at present it is ignored or indeed unwelcome.

The dean is regarded with sympathy and respect. His academic standards and his competence are admittedly all right. His faculty are happy to work with him, and regret that his hands are often tied, and that he gets a run-around from other officials. My own impressions of him are favorable.

Finances, which nowadays are the acute concern of most colleges, are no problem at the Atlanta Division. The Division has been shrewdly promoted, and the State, it is believed, will continue to be generous. As many of the inadequacies I have pointed out can be remedied by budget increases, it is particularly important to note that financial support presents no acute problem here.

SUGGESTIONS

Whatever be the final decision about the future of the Atlanta Center, one academic matter needs immediate correction. At present, the faculty has no real academic entity, and no responsibility. Academic policies are not discussed in faculty meetings, and there are no faculty committees which are functioning. Decisions at all levels of importance are, or are believed to be, at the pleasure of the director. Academic responsibility should immediately be placed in the hands of the faculty and the dean, and the faculty organized so that its normal functions can be carried out. It would seem that the present arrangement with the University of Georgia need not interfere with such a faculty organization at the Atlanta Center. Until the Atlanta Division faculty functions as a faculty normally does, it is difficult to see how the Division can ever be accredited on its own.

What factors must a board of regents consider in determining the future of the Atlanta Division? There is the present need, and indeed demand, for a four-year college in Atlanta, accredited for granting the A. B. degree. This demand will surely increase. Can this be met without diverting funds which are needed for the development of the University itself? What public relations are involved, for example, with other colleges in the Atlanta area? These are questions which no doubt have often been raised; yet a restatement of them may assist in clarifying some of the issues. In finding the answers, those responsible may wish to give attention to the following opinions:

1. The present Atlanta Division is a going concern, much better than a junior college and not yet strong enough to function as a senior college.
2. Financial support needed to make it a good senior college can, it seems, be provided.
3. As an accredited senior college offering the A. B. degree it would serve much more effectively a heavy concentration of the state's population. (Perhaps some restriction of its area to that of metropolitan Atlanta should be considered, as a means of safeguarding the interests of the state university.)
4. To gain accreditation, a real faculty responsibility and academic control must be clearly established.
5. To divorce the Atlanta Division from the University of Georgia without making the academic dean and the faculty the responsible authority in academic affairs would be disastrous.

6. The degree program of the College of Business Administration should be appraised by the national accrediting agency as soon as possible.

In brief, the question is how best to capitalize on the history, the present resources, and the personal dynamic associated with the Atlanta Division, raise it to a four-year college offering the A. B. degree, insure its accreditation, and yet avoid too serious a duplication and competition with the University of Georgia. The opportunity in the Atlanta area is very great indeed. I shall hope that some way may be worked out to develop this opportunity as it deserves.