



CIC History

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A Case Study on Interinstitutional Cooperation

Herman B. Wells

The establishment and workings of a highly successful consortium, the Committee on Institutional Cooperation – made up of the Big Ten and the University of Chicago – is described here by one of its founders, Herman B Wells, Chancellor of the University of Indiana.

The day has long since passed when a college or university can consider itself a fort of knowledge in a hostile frontierland of ignorance, jealously guarding unto itself its hoard of facts and ideas. Academic isolation has long been impractical; in today's world, it is impossible. At a time when yesterday's bright new fact becomes today's doubt and tomorrow's myth, no single institution has the resources in faculty or facilities to go it alone. A university must do more than just stand guard over the nation's heritage, it must illuminate the present and help shape the future. This demands cooperation – not a diversity of weaknesses, but a union of strengths.

The need for cooperation is obvious today. The need was just as great, although perhaps not so obvious, on December 3, 1956, when the presidents of the Big Ten universities met at the University Club in Chicago and took the first tentative steps toward formation of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), perhaps the world's greatest common market in education.

The presidents of the Big Ten universities (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Michigan State, Minnesota, Northwestern, Ohio State, Purdue, and Wisconsin) had been meeting twice annually for nearly 20 years to discuss their mutual problems. Going back through the minutes, I find such topics occupying our time as: the Midwest Universities Research Association; the Midwest Library Center; future trends of faculty salaries; an exchange of information regarding policies governing service of retired professors; the encroachment of the state upon university management and the responsibilities of governing boards; the implications of a proposed interstate compact concerning medical, dental and veterinary education; educational television; preservation of academic freedom policies and practices; accrediting practices of the North Central Association; and policies regarding student fees.

But that day in Chicago, the presidents of the Big Ten moved beyond discussion and took a bold step into the future. They agreed, in effect, to build bridges of cooperation across state and institutional boundaries. Although in retrospect the decision was right and proper, and probably long overdue, it might not have been made for years except for a casual conversation some months earlier between myself and Dr. James Perkins, then vice president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and now President of Cornell University.

The opening volley

Dr. Perkins was interested in the semi-annual meetings of the Big Ten presidents (called the Council of Ten), and particularly in what the presidents talked about. As I recall it now, our conversation went something like this:

Perkins: "Why do you Big Ten Presidents only talk about football when you get together?"

Wells: "We do talk about other things. In fact, we spend most of our time discussing educational problems."

Perkins: "Well, the press only reports your decisions about athletics. It is a pity for the meetings of presidents of such important institutions to be identified in the public mind only with athletics."

Wells: "We have a budget and staff to prepare the background material for our athletic decisions. To have effective discussions leading to decisions, we need also a joint secretariat for educational matters."

Perkins: "How much would it cost?"

Wells: "Oh, I don't know – as a good guess, \$50,000 per year."

Perkins: "Go back to the Council and see if they'll do it, and I will

On the basis of that suggestion, and with no guarantee that funds would be forthcoming, the possibility of formal interinstitutional cooperation was first broached at the Chicago meeting in December. Two possible subjects for cooperative study were suggested: the changing nature of student migration, and the philosophy of student fees.

That was the beginning. In their next meeting at Columbus, Ohio, where the Big Ten presidents had gathered for the inauguration of Novice G. Fawcett as president of the Ohio State University in April 1957, the Council of Ten organized the Committee on Institutional Cooperation. Later, the University of Chicago, a former member of the Big Ten, was taken into the group. On June 18, 1958, the Executive Committee of the Carnegie Corporation of New York appropriated \$40,000 for expenses during the academic year 1958-59, and the CIC began a cautious exploration of the ways in which 11 major universities – two private and nine state-supported – might pool their resources for the common good. On June 30, 1959, the Carnegie Corporation allocated a further \$254,000 to the CIC, and a dream took solid shape.

The wisdom of caution

The first steps, naturally enough, were hesitant and tentative. Each of the 11 universities was a distinguished and apparently self-sufficient institution, proud of its past and confident of its future. Ironically, it was this go-slow approach which directly led to the strongest possible ties between the 11 member institutions of the CIC. There was never a thought of imposing a supergovernment on these distinguished universities to force them into cooperation, never a suggestion that the individuality of any member be sacrificed.

Instead, each university named one top academic representative to the committee, which meets three times a year. Decisions of the majority were deemed not to bind the entire membership; a member institution of CIC may participate in any given program or not, according to its own needs and interests. Committee members are first and foremost the representatives of their own institutions, and the voluntary cooperation within the CIC in no way impinges on or complicates this basic responsibility.

This voluntary cooperation, within the framework of flexible agreements, has been the strength of the CIC. The CIC certainly was not the first compact between publicly assisted universities, but it was the first of its kind. Earlier arrangements for academic cooperation among public institutions of higher learning were written into law through the signing of interstate compacts which were complex to devise, cumbersome to administer, and transferred far too much academic control from the campus to the statehouse.

The efforts today to create a "nationwide" policy in education through an interstate compact is cut from the same cloth. The interstate compact may indeed bring about a form of cooperation that will hurdle state and institutional

borders, but there is great danger that the cooperation will be coercive, reluctant and consequently ineffective.

The Compact for Education appears to ignore the essential differences between elementary and secondary education, on the one hand, and higher education, on the other. A primary task of the school is to pass on to its pupils a generally well defined body of knowledge; a primary task of the university is to lead its students to and beyond the frontiers of the "known" and the "proven." The state tends to set the curriculum for the schools; the university's curriculum is determined by the institution's own community of scholars. The public schools actively campaign for public approval, even public guidance, of what they teach; the history of higher education, on the other hand, records many long and sometimes bitter struggles for freedom from political influence and domination of its classrooms and laboratories.

Out of this long struggle for freedom to teach and discover, working relationships have evolved between state governments and public institutions of higher learning. They have, on the whole, been mutually rewarding. Any pressure such as that inherent in the Compact for Education – to force the great public universities of this nation into a common mold poses a distinct threat to those relationships, and thus to higher education.

The working philosophy of the CIC has always been to help each member institution develop in depth and to exploit its own areas of strength, and then to make the combined strength available to all. In the 11 universities thus "merged," there is truly impressive strength – more than 25,000 faculty members, including some of the world's foremost scholars, a combined library of 20 million volumes, and a physical plant valued at more than \$1.6 billion.

The traveling scholar

The Traveling Scholar Program, initiated by the CIC presidents themselves in 1963, is a classic example of how the universities pool their resources for the common good and strengthen themselves in the process.

The program enables a graduate student at any of the 11 member institutions to study for a semester (or two quarters) at any other member university without the payment of special fees and without the necessity of meeting state residential requirements. He registers at his home university, pays his fees there, and has his grades recorded there – all with a minimum of red tape. Where he goes depends on his particular needs: a specialized course offering, a professor who is a world authority in his field, a unique library collection, or a one-of-a-kind research facility.

A traveling scholar may study physics with Iowa's James A. Van Allen, history with Wisconsin's Merle Curti, or economics with Minnesota's Walter Heller. He may use such facilities as: the library at Illinois, third largest in the nation; Purdue's Jet Propulsion Center, the nation's leading producer of

engineers and scientists in the propulsion field; Chemical Abstracts at Ohio State, the world's largest compiler of abstracts of published chemical discoveries; the internationally recognized Graduate School of Business at Indiana University, or Wisconsin's biotron, first in the world designed to study living organisms in a full range of controlled environmental conditions, including those in outer space.

When the program got under way in the 1963-64 academic year, 41 traveling scholars moved from their own to neighboring campuses to study in 20 different fields. Next year, there were 108 graduate students in 41 fields. Last year, 1965-66, the number of traveling scholars rose to 117, and the number of fields to 45. Thus far, we have obviously only scratched the surface of this program's potential; particularly in view of the fact that the 11 member institutions of the CIC enroll 48,000 graduate students and confer 30 percent of all doctorates in the United States each year. Although the number of traveling scholars will continue to grow, there has never been any intention to sponsor a mass migration between campuses. The program is, and will continue to be, highly selective: just the fact that a graduate student is working for a PhD does not make him automatically eligible. And, in keeping with the voluntary nature of all CIC programs, each university retains full authority to accept or reject any applicant, based on the institution's responsibilities to its own students, and the applicant's competence.

Institutional advantages

The advantage to the graduate student is obvious, while the advantage to the institutions is just as real but not so apparent. We can fully expect, for instance, that the traveling scholar program will encourage the 11 CIC institutions to develop special areas of strength, and become known as centers for specialized graduate study. In addition to avoiding costly duplication of courses and facilities – no small matter in these days of ever rising costs – such a development would underscore the basic idea of the CIC. No single institution, working alone, can hope to provide programs of universal excellence in all fields; 11 great institutions working together and pooling their resources can come very near to this ideal. The traveling scholars, for instance, have left their home campuses to study in such little known fields as legal anthropology, forest entomology, geophysical sciences, medical genetics, dental epidemiology, Oriental languages and literature, and mathematical biology.

Although the 11 member universities of the CIC are located in seven midwestern states, no institution is more than an hour or two away from any other by air or even automobile travel. One student even found it possible to commute twice weekly by train from his home campus at the University of Iowa to Northwestern University outside Chicago. A graduate student in political science, he was able to study such subjects as urbanization and urban sociology at the Northwestern Center for Metropolitan Studies, courses and facilities not available to him at Iowa. He caught the train from Iowa City every Tuesday and Thursday morning, and returned that night. While such a schedule is rare, and not to be recommended generally, it does illustrate the program's

flexibility.

Since the traveling scholar program got under way just a few short years ago, it has attracted considerable attention on both the east and west coasts. We have been pleased to note that both the Ivy League and the University of California system are putting just such an exchange program into effect. We also have had requests for information from interested ministries in South Africa, England, and Canada. In the interest of historical accuracy, it should be pointed out that the idea of the traveling scholar did not originate with the CIC, as the medieval European universities had a form of it centuries ago.

The traveling scholar program is just one of more than 40 cooperative ventures now under way in the CIC. After the original Carnegie grant was received, the first order of business was comparative studies of medical education and pharmacy schools, necessary and worthwhile, of course, but hardly innovative. Before long, however, the CIC began to evolve into the action group it was intended to be.

I have always been a firm believer that one should not make small plans for an institution or group of institutions, because the small plans are very difficult to achieve. But we soon found in CIC that to "think big," it was sometimes necessary to "think small" first. Such, at least, was the genesis of our very effective programs of seed grants.

Prophetic seed grants

The seed grants began when a group of geography professors requested enough money to hold a joint meeting in which they could discuss cooperative programs and curriculum improvements on an inter-university basis. The CIC gave the group \$1,000 – just enough to cover the costs of travel, meals, hotel bills, and incidental and related expenses. Out of that meeting grew several

there has been a phenomenal return on the money invested. An initial seed grant of \$2,000, followed by two more of \$1,000 each, financed the development of the most integrated program of graduate study in biometeorology in the world. The program received an initial grant of \$238,016 from the US Public Health Service in 1963, and another grant of \$794,724 in September 1966 – a return of \$258 for every \$1 invested in the seed grants.

Biometeorology

The joint program in biometeorology developed by the CIC institutions

institutes, held on a different campus each summer, provide intensive training at all levels in the Japanese and Chinese languages, ranging from first year introductory courses to advanced seminars in contrastive studies of the two languages. A student attending two seminars, and carrying a normal academic load in between, can cover in 15 months what ordinarily would take four years. Equally important, the faculty members from the CIC universities who staff the institutes meet in their own seminars to devise new instructional techniques and procedures, thus strengthening the programs in Japanese and Chinese at their own institutions. Like the traveling scholar program, the languages institutes are highly selective, accepting only one of every four or five applicants. Even so, enrollments have grown each year, from 145 in 1963, to 184 in 1964, 197 in 1965, and 226 in 1966. A unique feature of the program is that the student pays whatever tuition fee is lower. The Ford Foundation has supported this program with grants totaling \$486,000.

There are approximately 3,000 languages spoken in the world today, and the CIC liberal arts deans, working closely with their foreign language faculties, have identified 26 of these languages as most critical to the nation's needs. This poses a problem that pleads for a cooperative, interinstitutional, CIC-type solution. There now exists a well-advanced plan whereby each of the 11 universities will continue to offer its normal wide range of traditional foreign languages, but in addition will concentrate on developing strength and depth in one or more of the critical areas. Students will be able to cross state and institutional lines as needed. It is clear that although no one university can possibly develop strength in 26 foreign languages, 11 universities can do it with ease.

As the programs of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation have grown in number and effectiveness, their influence and value have spread far beyond the campuses of the 11 universities themselves and the boundaries of the seven states in which they are located. The Far Eastern Language Institutes, for instance, draw students and faculty from across the nation and from foreign lands. Inspired by the new curriculum studies in mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics, the Social Science Education Consortium is developing new materials and new teaching techniques for high school social studies. The CIC has even given a seed grant to the Association of Midwestern College Biology Teachers so that they may seek methods through which CIC institutions can help the smaller colleges improve their biology curricula. Architects in CIC institutions are addressing themselves to the vast problems of urban growth and sprawl, and their findings should find application in every metropolitan area of the nation.

Focusing on the Midwest

In the late summer of 1966, the CIC embarked on a project which may well prove to be its most ambitious and important yet – a joint and concentrated attack on the economic problems of the Midwest. Specialists in economics, engineering, business administration, industrial management, physical sciences, sociology, and political science were drawn from the faculties of the 11

member institutions. They work closely with governmental, business and industrial leaders of the area with one central goal: to identify the problems and find the solutions.

The Midwest could hardly be called a depressed area. Yet problems do exist. One, for instance, is the "brain drain" occasioned by the flow of talented, creative people from the area to the glamour industries of the two coasts. There is no logical reason why the Midwest should lag behind other regions of the country in any area of scientific and technological advance, particularly in military and space activities.

The problems to be tackled by the Council on Economic Growth, Technology and Public Policy are by no means regional in scope; and the solutions they find will have national implications. Consider, if you will, this excerpt from the Council's statement of objectives:

The American family, considered as a social and economic unit, appears to be both more mobile and shorter-lived than in previous generations. Grandparents no longer live with their sons' or daughters' families as commonly as in the past; children leave at an earlier age; and available statistics on American mobility reveal a traditionally restless people less than ever inclined to stay where they are. Among the implications of these observations is that the many industries providing goods and services to the American family should begin to plan now to accommodate a changing family pattern. What projections could be made, for instance, for the most suitable type of housing for such a family? What appliances will such housing have, to contain? What appliances should be easily transportable? And, assuming that some of these markets of the future could be charted with a fair degree of certainty, what technological developments are necessary to satisfy future demands? Already manufacturers in the Midwest are beginning to turn to universities with such problems.

Can there be serious doubt that any problem, no matter how great, can escape the combined attack of the finest intellects which can be mustered from 11 distinguished institutions of higher learning? We believe it both fight and necessary that the CIC concern itself with the economic problems of the Midwest. It is, and always has been, the traditional role of the university to bring its vast resources to bear on all the problems of those who support it through taxes and gifts.

International implications

Just about a year before the formation of the Council on Economic Growth, Technology, and Public Policy, the CIC became truly international in scope. The US State Department's Agency for International Development (AID) awarded the CIC a contract of \$1,183,000 to undertake a comprehensive analysis of AID-assisted agricultural education and research programs being

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The story of the CIC is not an unblemished record of success. One time, for instance, the representatives of the physics departments got together in a meeting at Ohio State University. They couldn't find anything to cooperate on, so they went home. Physics is a glamour science today, with considerable outside money available for research projects. The CIC representatives meeting in Columbus were so busily engaged in their own projects, so committed to their own work, that they saw no urgency or necessity for cooperative ventures. Some day, it seems virtually certain that they will.

Another idea that didn't work out at the time – but may someday – concerned linking the 11 campuses into a gigantic computer network. Because each of the 11 universities has its own computer system, why not link them all together for the instant retrieval of research data stored on any campus? This, it seems, was an idea ahead of its time. Each of the universities is still struggling to find the best way to utilize its own computer, and they aren't yet ready for such a massive program of coordination.

There have been other times when faculty representatives met and talked with no apparent results. This is to be expected. Sometimes, as with the computer network, the time just isn't ripe. Sometimes, perhaps, it is because several of the universities have no significant interest in a particular field.

throughout the land. A 1965-66 survey shows there are 1,017 cooperative unions of colleges and universities, and 245 others in the advanced planning stages. Most of these cooperative federations have come into being because the CIC showed the way and proved cooperation was not only desirable but possible. We know we have helped change the face of American higher education for the better and it's a very good feeling.

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