The conundrum might be stated follows: An institution must first survive in order to educate; however, its only justification for survival is determined by the quality of education it provides.

I am not using survival in the literal sense, but rather as the most extreme result of inadequate institutional finance or other resources. The conundrum perhaps more accurately describes a division which often is an oppositional relationship between operation and mission of an educational institution. Operation as it refers to management is the responsibility of administrators. Mission is the educational programs and faculty are accountable for them. Although operation and mission might be intertwined, they are distinctly different in terms of objectives, means and values.

For the purpose of my remarks, I am defining educational effectiveness as processes, procedures or conditions producing a desired end. Educational effectiveness is judged by student motivation, commitment, productivity and proficiency in their field of study. This is instructional efficiency and it is quite different from operational efficiency which is measured by a comparison of production with cost in terms of energy, time and money. Among other responsibilities, administration manages academic records and services, institutional finances, public relations, building maintenance and grounds, student housing, food services and so forth.

Administration can be divided into two areas of operational and educational management. Educational management is represented by Provost, Deans and Department Heads. There are several factors that affect faculty and educational quality. One being that academic administrators tend to identify with, and serve institutional administrators more so than they do faculty and educational programs. Secondly, while most academic administrators come from the teaching ranks, they often are ambitious individuals who see greater prestige and higher salaries in administration, and actively seek administrative positions. Authority or power of office are attractive
There is no question, but what we would do better if educational institutions providing inferior instruction did not survive. However, in public education, schools at all levels are maintained regardless of educational quality. There are institutions more successful at marketing than instructional quality, and they too manage to survive.

The implications of dichotomy dictate the necessity for balance between operation of the institution and academic instruction as the most logical and reasonable course to follow. Whenever either one is pursued at the expense of the other, the institution invariably is in trouble either financially or academically.

Factors establishing balance are multiple and seldom identified. Perhaps the greatest difficulty in understanding falls on the side of educational performance. It does not require any special genius to recognize financial problems, either money is there or it is not or it is a fixed amount limiting what can and cannot be accomplished. It is educational quality where identifying goals, knowing what is required and how to achieve them that is most perplexing. Operational matters are generally pragmatic and readily identifiable. Dealing with instructional areas tend to be idealistic, less precise, and the means are often heretical or speculative with the outcome being uncertain.

Because of financial problems beginning during the 1970s, institutional survival became a principal concern for governing bodies. The response was emphasis on management. Since then, the growth of administration in education has been phenomenal. Now, institutional management is out of balance with mission. It is not only that administrators are the most powerful force in education, but it is that management values dominate.

An extreme, but good example of administrative values being contrary to the best interests of education occurred during a job interview circa 1976 at a Northcentral public university. I was interviewing for the position of Department Head in Art. On the second day, I had my meeting with the Dean. He asked what I would do if appointed to the position? Based on my observations, I began to describe the steps to be taken that would improve the quality of programs. After a few minutes, the Dean interrupted me to say, “I am not interested in that. What would you do to increase the size of classes that could be taught with less faculty?” I replied that I had never considered that, and most likely, never would. Our meeting ended abruptly and no job offer followed.

Perhaps the most blatant example of division between operational and educational values occurred while I was at Carnegie Mellon University during the early 1980s. At the beginning of the academic year, President Cyert addressed the entire faculty. He told us that the university was embarking on a new policy. The policy was described as follows: in the past it had been traditional to put institutional resources into improving weaker programs to raise them to the same level as the best ones.
Education is something considerably greater than a commercial venture. The dollar is not the bottom line in education! I believe education of youth to be a societal obligation to the future that should be judged more in terms of effectiveness than in terms of cost.

Some common examples of differences in opinion between faculty and administrators relate to the use of space and access to technical facilities. Especially so in visual art programs, assigning fixed work space to students is a factor that affects student productivity and commitment. Administrators favor multiple-use of space through accommodating different students and courses at different times, allowing space to be in constant use which is more cost-effective and efficient. But it is a practice that proves to be debilitating for faculty and students.

Duplication of technical facilities is another example of a situation which would be educationally effective, but from a managerial standpoint, it is extremely inefficient. If technical facilities are provided for each program with access restricted to students within that program, there will be a decided improvement to educational effectiveness. When equipment is provided for a single program, it tends to be specialized and directly related to the needs of that program. To centralize technical facilities and make them available to students from several disciplines is less expensive, easier to manage and more efficient from the administrative point-of-view. Because the facility serves a variety of students and programs, a more general range of equipment is installed that might not meet specific needs for some programs. Because of the increased numbers of students using the same equipment in centralized labs, access is more restricted than if it were available as a program facility.

Another good example of the difference in values currently is found in the priority set by administration on research, and how faculty are rewarded for professional activity, research and success in obtaining grants. It reveals that administrators are more concerned with income (operational) than with teaching (mission.) Examination of criteria and the rewards for professional activity/research compared to those for teaching makes the point very clear. One has to wonder what the state of higher education would be today, if in the past, administrators had been as critical and demanding for professional involvement and excellence in teaching as they are now for research.

Management places a high value on efficiency. Educators are more concerned with what is effective, efficiency be damned! My experience has been that the conditions most conducive to student learning experiences are at times extremely inefficient and expensive from a managerial viewpoint.

Managerial efficiency is based on control, and administrators place a high value on a smooth management operation. Unfortunately, this frequently leads to a boss and employee relationship between administrators and teachers. Often there is an accompanying element of managerial paternalism which destroys trust between the two groups and leads to resentment or cynicism among teachers. Administrative paternalism is most evident in the comparison between what is allocated to program budgets and how much is retained as discretionary.
and state-of-the-art facilities, all of which contribute to raising educational quality in those areas and establishing an excellent learning environment for students. However, there also is a downside. Increased pressures for research often result in reduction of time that the most capable teachers can devote to educational planning, students and academic governance. The present situation attracts, or encourages, individuals more interested in personal work than in teaching.

Administration is tempted to funnel added resources into programs that produce the most income from research. This drains resources from educational programs that are important but do not attract large amounts of research money.

Administrative control mechanisms invariably reduce flexibility and sustain status quo. Education is a field that is in constant state of flux and change is inherent to both the educational process and programs. Teachers who want to do things differently are usually stymied because of institutional policies. Faculty generally desire the flexibility to experiment or do things differently to improve, expand or modify programs.

Particularly so at public universities, change is incredibly difficult and slow. It can take up to five years to introduce new courses or change requirements.

Because of preoccupation with image, management is prone to build extensive facilities for the performing arts and art museums without corresponding increase of funds, facilities or space for instruction in the arts. This shortcoming is perhaps more so for the visual than for the performing arts. Students in the performing arts benefit from facilities through both observation and participation. It is extremely rare to find a university museum that exhibits faculty or student work or has a structured working relationship with Art History faculty and students. Where faculty and students in drama, dance and music have opportunities to perform for the public, visual artists and art historians are denied the same privilege with university art museums.

Management values the public perception of the university as a center for the arts to a greater extent than it does the quality of instruction in the arts. This observation in no way implies that universities should not be a cultural resource for the community through performing arts programs and museum exhibitions. It is only that it should not be done at the expense of instruction in the arts.

Some part of the present situation traces to the fact that Trustees, Regents and Legislators have contact mainly with management, and they seldom meet with those who are actually working directly with students in the classroom and studio. What boards hear is often only a pragmatic view of education based on managerial factors. Perhaps Boards should hear from faculty what would be ideal as well as what is practical from administrators.