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PERCEPTIONS OF STAFF AND COMMISSIONERS OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLE OF A STATEWIDE HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING AGENCY: A TENNESSEE CASE STUDY

The Ohio State University

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PERCEPTIONS OF STAFF AND COMMISSIONERS OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS
ROLE OF A STATEWIDE HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING AGENCY:
A TENNESSEE CASE STUDY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Elbert C. Braddock, Jr., B.A., M.A.T.

The Ohio State University
1983

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With my deepest love, this dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Jowain, for her love, close friendship, support and powers of endurance.
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FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Education, Curriculum and Foundations
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A Brief Overview

This study is concerned with the public relations aspects of state higher education coordinating organizations, agencies created by legislatures and governors in the 1960s in states where there were no structures for statewide governance of the upper levels of public post-secondary education. Some states had already established statewide higher education boards which directly coordinated and governed all aspects of higher learning. In others, however, governance was in the hands of the boards of individual colleges and universities. Certain fiscal and programmatic matters required final approval of state government, but each individual institution pleaded its case directly to the governors or state legislature in intense lobbying. Statewide higher education agencies were created to provide a specific governance and administrative structure in those situations, establishing an official body of appointed lay citizens and professional education-management personnel between the institutions and state government.

Initial concerns of this investigation evolved into a case study of one such organization, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, with offices in Nashville. Since public relations already had an established role in the life of higher education institutions throughout the United States and generally in the corporate life of business, industry and
government in American society, the aim of the study was to learn what role public relations might play (if any) in the unique governmental-organizational situation presented by statewide higher education coordinating agencies.

Motivation: A Personal Touch

This study began casually with the quickening approach of a state of unemployment for the investigator and the urgent need to have some relevant employment continue with as brief an interruption as possible. The relevant area sought was higher education public relations or public affairs administration because of the investigator's four prior years in higher education public relations elsewhere and more than three years on the staff of the Vice President for Public Affairs at The Ohio State University simultaneous with his doctoral program at OSU. Nevertheless, higher education's state of diminishing resources had continued in recent years and good positions--open ones--were increasingly difficult to find. Search for a field not so visible and well searched as those in more visible major higher education institutions--more visible to the growing field of job competitors--seemed a reasonable strategy.

Upon discovery that the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR), a statewide coordinating agency, had begun a search to fill a position as public relations director on its staff, the investigator applied for the position as a first step in the strategy. One simple question arose first. Why did such an agency need a public relations professional? In the week prior to a preliminary interview appointment, the investigator read extensively about the OBR, learning where possible why this coordinating agency--or by inference others--required a public relations
professional to carry out its mission. Such agencies generally had been created by state legislatures to help, among other things, coordinate the many disparate interests of higher education in each state, eliminating or reducing the need for each institution to lobby the legislature for shares of diminishing state fiscal resources, the perceived share being previously based upon the individual institution's own singular perspective of its needs, problems and programs.

It was hoped that the investigator's brief heuristic reading might suggest a rationale for public relations at OBR, especially if that rationale might be seen to arise from Ohio's or others' legislative mandate, the attitudes, beliefs or philosophies of the agencies' "founding fathers" or events in those formative months subsequent to establishment. No such rationale was directly stated, but some inferences were inviting. After all, John Millett, founding chief executive of the Ohio Board of Regents--and nationally respected leader in higher education--had pointed earlier to the importance of promoting a "sense of shared purpose" (1) between higher education and society generally. He was clear in suggesting the need to make broad and varied constituencies more aware of the relationship between education and society. It seemed a fair initial assumption that public relations, as a major thrust in institutional advancement (through community relations, media relations, corporate spokesman for central administration, etc.), might play a role, might bring its communications skills to bear on this need, especially from the neutral platform of an agency.

That initial reading turned up some tantalizing questions but without sufficient substance. Since the investigator eventually was not
invited to fill the position at the Ohio Board of Regents, to help carry out Millett's charge, the author instead turned to this doctoral investigation to answer those and other questions.

**Public Relations: At Home On Campus**

In American public higher education, what is generally called "public relations" has been an established arm of the institutional mission since the early 1900s. Its presence is clear and accepted, although it is variously labelled public affairs, public relations, public information, university relations, college relations, communications or any of several other departmental or administrative titles, depending on the breadth of capability or scope of mission in a given campus situation.

Public relations in higher education is often viewed as a contemporary phenomenon, a recent surge of press agency called into play in times of trouble. And it is often considered as an activity confined to the college campus news bureau or the office of the sports information director. In fact, public relations has a longer history and has gained the support from many college and university presidents and others in higher education leadership.

"My first article on the subject was published in 1935," said Dr. David Henry, president emeritus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, describing his long-standing support of public relations as an important administrative function then and now. (2)

"Do I feel the same way? Yes, emphatically," he stated. "What has changed? Only the setting and the greater urgency. I recently wrote about the beginning of our program at Illinois: 'I knew that public
relations in the ordinary sense of the term was anathema to the academic community. Faculty associated the term with press agentry, contrived attention getting, super salesmanship without regard to substance. I had no more interest in such approaches than did others; but I realized that the decisions for forward movement at Illinois, involving increased appropriations, would require public good will, public involvement and a broad sense of public understanding." (3)

The broadest possible descriptor of these activities in higher education is "institutional advancement," a phrase unique to higher education because of higher education's unique constituencies. The concept is amply addressed in the Handbook of Institutional Advancement (4), a compendium of essays and organizational guidelines written by many of the leading professionals and recognized leaders of the Council for the Advancement of Support of Education (CASE). Indeed, the book is tantamount to the "bible" of CASE, not because of its antiquity but because it contains full treatment of both practical detail and philosophy embraced by CASE, formed in a merger of the American College Public Relations Association and the American Alumni Council in 1974.

Merger of these organizations has done much to bring together the varied missions of once separate but related activities of the university and college in contact with their diverse publics and to provide a unified mission under the single banner of "institutional advancement." This includes development, the private fund-raising arm of all higher education, media relations, publications, alumni relations, the all-important government relations and the management skills to make them work effectively, separately and together.
Decline of Public Support: The PR Role

CASE was organized in the wake of some clear signs of disenchantment of the American public with its systems and institutions of education, including sharp reduction of the number of school bond referendums approved in the nation. This was a sign interpreted by the USOE and many other observers as a vote of no confidence in education at all levels, not just to meet the test of fiscal accountability but to realize those basic societal purposes, achievement of which education traditionally has been charged in the United States.

S. P. Marland, Jr., Assistant Secretary for Education in the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, expressed grave concern at the turn away from the traditional public embrace of the institutions and purposes of education in the nation.

There is manifest in the country, to my knowledge for the first time in our history, an active loss of enchantment with our schools—and I employ that description to cover the entire range of education from kindergarten through graduate school [Marland said]. There is a growing doubt about the results of the educational process as it is presently arranged, a lively distrust...as to whether the education process benefits those who experience it. For the first time, Americans in significant numbers are questioning the purpose of education, the competence of educators, the usefulness of the system of preparing young minds for life in these turbulent times. The young themselves are also joining in this questioning [he added]. (5)

Marland stated:

We cannot escape the clear implication that defeat of a school bond referendum or the rejection of a district budget is more accurately and honestly interpreted as an expression of discontent rather than penuriousness. (6)

The required response to this turn of events, Marland said, is that "education needs to put its case firmly and clearly before the public."

(7) To this end, nearly every organization with a communication role in
both schools and higher education has been given a role in turning the
tide of public opinion, in generating support and understanding among a
wide variety of publics of the achievements of education, its needs, its
resources and its value to individuals and society at large. Results
are far from clear and may not be for many years yet, but at least most
communications professionals in education have accepted the challenge
and responsibility of helping to create this climate of support for edu-
cation.

The job at hand for higher education was still being weighed,
measured and described a few years after Marland and a host of others
had expressed alarm at the "crisis in public confidence" in education.
George Bonham, editor-in-chief of Change, in an article aimed at CASE
professionals, gave this charge:

I call on you to take these professional challenges seri-
ously. Perhaps for the first time in memory, education needs
you more than you need it. Do not forfeit this chance to take
the high road to help shape a vigorous new academic enterprise.
For the old notions are surely dying. It is for you, as much
as anyone else, to sit at the table to help shape the future
or else go down with the relics of the past. (8)

Marland gave a similar charge to members of the National School
Public Relations Association, telling them they must help earn "the
genuine respect of our constituents, including the young people in our
classrooms." He told them that "the public relations job is to
stimulate improvement, and to communicate it when it occurs. Do right,
as you say, and let the people know about it." (9)

Private leadership has also raised a cry for some intelligent and
far-sighted public relations strategy to help overcome the crisis in
confidence among the general public, government and other key publics of
higher education.
One of these, Frances Pray, a former educator and a consultant, advised education administrators not to be shocked when American citizens, already attacking blind faith in the military establishment and weary of abuses to consumers by cynical merchants and industrialists, turn away from their traditional reverence for the powers of education and educators. He urged higher education leaders to turn their communication resources to "harness advocacy" for education in order "to win confidence of the public in response to evidence of creative programs and aspirations based on real issues." (10)

The General Problem

Also in the 1960s and 1970s, state governments already had begun an effort to achieve another kind of accountability—fiscal and programmatic—in higher education, a movement with different goals but intent similar to the effort to regain public support for higher learning in the eyes of the public. In this instance, the search for public support was focused on the taxpayers who foot much of the bill for state-assisted higher education.

Many states where statewide governance previously had not been established formed what came to be known as higher education coordinating organizations, created to eliminate costly duplication of programs and generally to reduce higher education costs for a society already feeling more pressures from declining tax revenues and rising demands for services. This required the public, its elected officials and their appointed leaders to examine more closely the priorities of the past, to make harder choices among them and to challenge every demand for more or better services.
This investigation seeks to learn what role (if any) the public relations function, already established throughout most other aspects of higher education, might play in the statewide higher education coordinating agencies, created by those same elected officials to regain public confidence lost because of uncoordinated--and therefore not fully accountable--use of public tax resources. The investigation seeks to learn this by a case study of one such coordinating organization, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. Specifically, the aim of the study is to learn the perceptions of the public relations role as expressed by the policy makers and administrators most directly responsible for it.

Such a study was needed because statewide coordination of higher education grows in importance with each increment of decrease in public tax revenue, with each upward spiral of inflation and with each demand for services to state-assisted higher education and to society at large. While resources may diminish, the importance of higher education as a public resource increases with each societal challenge requiring the harnessing of the arts, sciences or technology present in every institution of higher learning.

Therefore, underlying questions in this investigation are: Should any organization charged with the responsibility of coordinating higher education also bear responsibility for fully communicating not only the tools and dynamics of coordination but also the important spirit beneath the substance of what is being coordinated? Should the agency seek public support and understanding of all that is being coordinated? If institutions of higher learning accept responsibility for some of the
tasks of seeking public support, it seemed pertinent to examine if the coordinating organization should play a similar role—and if so, what skills and strategies might be brought to bear to accomplish such a task. Is public relations, acknowledged throughout the higher education community, a suitable means to manage the organization's communications resources and needs?

To gather data for this study, the nine appointed members of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the nine professional staff employed by the Commission were interviewed using a pre-tested interview schedule designed to garner some collective perceptions of each group as to selected matters pertaining to public relations in the organization and to secure in-depth perceptions of these individuals in response to open-ended questions. Specifically, the study examined perceptions pertaining to public relations activities in THEC of the appointed policy makers and employed professional education and management administrators of one higher education coordinating agency as to the role that public relations might play in the organization's total mission. The study, then, is an examination of public relations activities in the eyes of members of the two official bodies which have the most influence over all aspects of managing and administering the agency.

To give the study some national perspective, a context in which to place the eventual findings of the case study, answers to some broad, fundamental organizational details were sought from each of the 29 statewide coordinating agencies through a brief questionnaire mailed to each of them.
Coordination: A Communication Mission?

The new agencies are viewed by many administrators and academic leaders as unnecessary appendages, burdensome government-sponsored superstructures erected upon the more traditional autonomous forms of institutional governance. Yet, the continuing public demand for efficient management of the increasingly complex higher education enterprise in every state seems to forecast stronger roles in guiding the fortunes of higher education in the years ahead. That role seems dictated by the continuing involvement of state government in the conduct of the affairs of higher education. Yet the agencies exist in settings that leave them without those more recognizable constituencies and enjoyed by the individual colleges and universities.

These organizations must function without the broader, more established public identity of the individual institutions and their principal leaders, without the texture of collegiate tradition, old school ties with alumni, parents and friends of the institutions, without the credentials of institutional achievements or needs. Any one of these can be more easily translated into pleas for support by an individual institution. These agencies, at least on the surface, must carry out their responsibilities with little more than a name, an often limited legislative mandate and the influence of their staff to help them achieve goals for both the agency and higher education generally.

It is to traditional and established constituencies that a university or college aims its communications to generate support, to demonstrate its proper and purposeful role in a given state, to show its effectiveness in responding to public needs—upholding societal values,
supplying manpower, solving problems in the public interest and meeting looming societal challenges. Coordinating agencies cannot easily turn to such groups.

Communication to and from a statewide coordinating agency is by no means limited to the channels managed by public relations or public information professionals. The same is true for a university or any public or private body with a need to present a case to its constituencies. Nearly every act of the agency's top executive plays its part in communicating, in shaping a certain posture in its public affairs. The same is true for many key members of its staff. A major communication role is performed by the government relations functions of the agency, whether it is managed by a specially trained or experienced professional in that field or by any other top leadership individual on the staff. Speeches by the agency chief executive, conferences, budget hearings, and planning sessions—all can play an important role in communicating aims and intents for an agency just as well as publications and articles published in a newspaper or film broadcast by electronic media.

It is not the intent here to study the entire spectrum of all such activities. It is sufficient to examine some of them and acknowledge that such activities are part of the larger fabric of communication.

Each state coordinating agency operates in a distinctly individual political and social environment, each with its own network of support or tangle of barriers to leadership. Each is seeking in its own way the formula for successful cooperation between agency and institution, between institutions, between each agency and its acknowledged publics. It is the intent of this investigation to identify what ought to
be the public relations role (if any) of THEC, the principles and issues involved and the practices, directions and goals of the agency to help restore the public's confidence in higher education.

If higher education coordinating agencies are now to have a larger role in assuring that educational and other goals are met, does that role include communication to promote better education programs? Does it include communication to restore public confidence in higher education? From what reservoirs of public support are the agencies to draw to meet any such objectives? What are their constituencies? Are they the appropriate constituencies for such an organization? Should the agencies broaden the number and type of their constituencies? What staff are employed with a specific communication responsibility? What are these employees' duties and limitations? Are such agencies doomed to failure in a search for public support of higher education because they must take a back seat to institutions still vigorously practicing and advocating institutional autonomy? Is there a public relations or communication mission unique to such supraorganizations? What are the communication roles of such agencies as perceived by the agencies themselves, by both governance and administrative leadership? Is their role limited by the legislative mandate given each agency?

Millett, president of Miami University of Ohio prior to becoming first chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents, a state coordinating agency, said, "Perhaps the least understood and the least considered issue involving the very essence of the educational process and the integrity of higher education institutions is that of the relationship between education and society." (11)
Since statewide coordinating agencies have emerged with significant roles in governance of public higher education, it is fair and useful to inquire if they are assuming or preparing to assume greater responsibility with the institutions in explaining and illustrating this relationship between education and society to the crucial constituencies of their respective states.

Constituencies: From Whom Cometh the Help?

The matter of these publics is one of several important keys to this study. Communications to these distinctly different groups are ideally prepared for and aimed at selected constituencies with which the public relations professional communicates in the name of the university. These constituencies have generally accepted the notion of such communications and respond to them variously to help reach acknowledged educational and societal goals. The respective roles of institution and constituency are generally established: the institution provides educational and other services, while government, alumni, industrial and commercial interests and private citizens respond with moral and financial support of varying kinds and amounts.

Intangible resources which make it easier for institutions of higher education to generate support from constituents include campus tradition and history, collegiate athletic teams, artifacts and monuments to the past, ritual, a seemingly natural human propensity toward nostalgia, the mystique of higher learning and the appeal of the loftiest societal ideas and ideals as embodied in the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. They call members of each new generation to
treasure what has been and to build anew for succeeding generations in a kind of perpetual lobbying for higher education in the future.

While this process continues, the governance of higher education has changed. A major change has been in the emergence of statewide higher education coordinating agencies, authorized and paid for by state governments and established as a major step to answer the public cry for fiscal and programmatic accountability to the public at large and their legislative representatives. In 29 of the 50 states, these coordinating or regulatory agencies have been established by state legislatures with differing authority and degrees of independence in each.

These agencies have been given a mandate somehow to regulate and improve public post-secondary education in those 29 states, to improve the means by which individual institutions pursue their educational and fiscal goals yet to coordinate the educational functions and missions of all higher education in the state.

Statewide coordinating agencies have been established to give some perspective to the needs of a statewide student population rather than the student bodies of a group of individual institutions, to meet the needs of society at large and to plan programs in an environment of dwindling sources of revenue. In some instances, the charge from the legislatures to the agencies includes at least some articulation of the activities and missions of private higher education along with that of publicly supported post-secondary programs. Statewide coordination or regulation is designed to eliminate some of the ill effects of poor planning and the waste of duplication.
This change in the pattern of autonomous institutional governance occurred in the years of deceleration of unprecedented growth in numbers of students, faculty, physical facilities and programs, much of it made possible by high levels of federal spending in the "glory years" of American higher education in the 1960s. Now, in response to the outcry for fiscal and academic accountability, nationally and in each state, the statewide coordinating agencies have been established by state legislature and given varying mandates to achieve greater effectiveness with shrinking economic resources through a coordinated educational program.

Terminology

Institutional advancement as a concept and a practice now includes or influences every means by which the institution reaches its various constituencies--from massive fund raising campaigns to a press release or a telephone call to a concerned parent or questioning student. Institutional advancement embraces and subsumes all of the major activities and skills by which institutions seek aid and support for societal advances through approval of those publics which exercise the power to deter or promote those societal advances.

In the Handbook of Institutional Advancement, such activities and skills are described in 42 essays on internal and external communications, fund raising, alumni relations, government relations, publications, executive management and many other topics. The preface describes the broad front on which higher education is waging its campaign to generate support. The volume is written largely for those professionals who work to generate that support specifically for
institutions of higher learning and not other groups or consortia with similar missions. Therefore, the authors address themselves to "institutional advancement." The term is defined as "all those programs and activities undertaken by a college or university to develop understanding and support from all of its publics for its educational goals." (12)

Since institutional or educational advancement covers so many professional areas, this study will give major attention to the skills and personnel involved in the planning and management of specific areas of the process of institutional advancement—media relations, publications, internal communication, those skills and activities generally associated with the management area of "public relations."

In spite of what is often felt to be a negative image in the term "public relations," that term is a valid one. Most professionals accept it without any negative connotation and many institutions and corporate offices use the title of "director of public relations." Further, the term includes the positive connotation of working in the public interest and the building of relations with various segments of the general public. It also embraces the process of two-way communication between the institution, agency or organization and its many publics. Changing philosophies in this century have led to an important editing of the phrase "public relations" to emphasize that "the public relations man has become the publics relations man." (13)

Other terms used in this study, and their descriptions or definitions, are:
**Mass Media.** Any commercial or publicly supported newspapers and other print media, electronic broadcast media and motion pictures which have the capability of reaching large numbers of people in a community or region of the nation and have the characteristic of indefinite, identical reproduction.

**Public Information.** A one-way system of supplying information to groups and individuals, usually through print or electronic materials provided by the institution or organization but often prepared by representatives of the mass media with the cooperation of the institution or organization.

**Public Affairs.** The part of an organization which is involved in or supervises all or most of the educational advancement responsibilities. A vice president for public affairs generally would direct the activities of alumni relations, government relations, media relations, publications and special campus events. The term is often used synonymously with others such as "university relations," "college relations," and "institutional relations."

**Publics.** Internal and external sub-groups of the general public served by the institution or organization and with which they communicate and receive responses. These specialized target groups include, in the instance of higher education, legislators and others in government, students, parents, alumni, faculty, potential donors, taxpayers and other institutions and organizations. Many individuals may belong to several groups. While the general public may embrace all other groups, it constitutes a separate group and is the target of broader communication through the mass media.
Setting of the Study

This investigation is a case study of the role of public relations (as a broad concept and as a specific administrative act) in one coordinating agency, namely the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. It is an examination of the perceptions of public relations as indicated or expressed by members of the administrative staff, located in the agency’s offices in Nashville, and by the appointed members of the Commission, all lay citizens conducting business, law or other activities throughout the state.

Some details of the history and current staff of THEC are pertinent to this investigation.

In 1967, an act of the Tennessee General Assembly (a bicameral body composed of a senate and a house of representatives) established the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to provide "coordination and unity" (14) in programs of higher education among the institutions of the state. The nine-member THEC governing body is composed of citizens appointed by the governor and must include a representative from each congressional district, and at least one-third of its membership must represent the principal majority political party. Each member is appointed for a nine-year term.

While "coordination" is not specifically defined, such definition is delineated in specific responsibilities, including these:

* Development of a master plan for the future development of public higher education.

* Development of policies and formulae for the equitable distribution of public funds among the state's higher education institutions.
* Studying the need for specific programs to minimize duplication and promote cooperation among institutions.

* Reviewing tuition and fees and making recommendations to governing boards in the state in regard to both.

* Reviewing for approval or disapproval all proposals for new degree programs or academic departments or divisions.

* Conducting a program of public information concerning higher education in Tennessee.

* Studying and making recommendations concerning the establishment of new institutions.

* Submitting a biennial report to the governor and the General Assembly on the status of public higher education. (15)

Since 1967, new legislation has authorized THEC to license non-accredited, in-state, private or proprietary degree-granting institutions and all out-of-state institutions to operate in Tennessee. THEC is also now authorized to contract with private accredited institutions of higher learning for special services under the provisions of its established mandate. (16) The agency also administers certain statewide federal programs. The General Assembly in 1974 passed the Postsecondary Education Authorization Act, under which THEC is given responsibility for implementing certain portions of the Act, specifically to determine whether institutions under THEC's coordination authority should be operated. Five years later, THEC was further authorized to make recommendations to governing boards for termination of on-campus and off-campus public higher education programs the agency finds duplicated unnecessarily elsewhere. (17)
Governing boards exist separately for each of the 39 private colleges and universities in the state as well as for the private vocational and trade schools. Coordination by THEC is provided in the context of colleges, universities, community colleges and technical institutes directly governed by the three governing boards: Tennessee Board of Trustees, the State Board of Regents and the State Board of Vocational Education. (18) THEC's responsibilities are more heavily focused on the first two. THEC's authority for program and fiscal matters governed by the vocational education board is restricted to the state's four technical institutes.

The UT Board of Trustees is the policy-making body for four campuses at Knoxville, Memphis, Martin and Chattanooga and three special institutes. Membership on the 15-member board include the governor, commissioner of education, commissioner of agriculture, executive director of THEC (non-voting) and president of the UT system. The other 10 members are from specified counties. The composition also must include one student, four females and one-third from alumni of the university. A third also must be members of the minority political party in the state.

The 17-member Board of Regents governs six universities and 10 community colleges. Twelve members are appointed by the governor. Four ex-officio members are the governor, commissioner of education (chief executive of the K-12 State Board of Education), the commissioner of agriculture, the THEC executive director (non-voting) and the immediate past commissioner of education. Eight members must be from each of the eight congressional districts, and three are appointed at large. Other
specifications are similar to those established for the University of Tennessee as to minorities, students and alumni. (19)

At the time of this study, THEC professional staff consisted of the executive director, three associate directors (for academic affairs, fiscal affairs and for state-federal affairs), five assistant directors (two in academic affairs, two in fiscal affairs and one in state-federal affairs), six educational program specialists, two executive aides and a grants management officer. Only the executive director, the three associate directors and the five assistant directors were included in the study.

During the first 12 years of THEC's existence, it operated with a professional position with the title of public informational specialist, reporting to the associate director for state-federal affairs. The employee's primary duties were related to news media, including writing and distribution of news releases and coordinating events involving the news media and the general public, such as public hearings and other meetings and events of THEC. The position by that title has been abolished. Many of the duties formerly assigned to that position have been assigned to the position of "educational program specialist," along with other duties such as writing reports and other documents as assigned by the associate director for state-federal relations.

Summary

This research inquiry began with the need to know the pertinence of public relations as a communication management function (if any) to the growing role of statewide higher education coordinating agencies. These agencies were established to regulate higher education under increasing demands for fiscal and programmatic accountability.
This inquiry seeks, then, to learn the pertinence of that function by means of a study of the perceptions of those bodies charged with the governance and administration of coordination in one state, Tennessee.
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CHAPTER II

THE LITERATURE

The emergence of the state higher education coordinating agencies as a special phenomenon in post-secondary education governance has been chronicled by both critics and supporters of them. Their relatively brief history has been told--continues to be told--as part of the larger unfolding story of the growing presence of state government in state assisted public higher education.

A State Board of Regents was established in New York in 1784. The University System of Georgia can trace its centralized system of higher education to an amendment in its charter in 1785. The administrative steps which led to the contemporary saga of coordination began in 1896 in South Dakota. (1) Smittle dealt with the need for coordination as it was perceived in 1939. (2) But the coordinating agencies, formed under much more traumatic social and governmental pressures than conceived at any earlier time, are essentially a modern story only now in the early chapters of its telling.

But the body of literature pertinent to this study embraces the emergence of the coordinating agencies, the literature of higher education governance in general and the role of public affairs and public relations in the advancement of higher education. Naturally, an investigation must take into consideration some basic precepts of human communication but focused most appropriately upon mass communication.
And it must include the dimensions and substance of other research of communication activities in organizations.

**What is Communication?**

There are problems and limitations in the study of communication activities of interest to this study that are born of the study of communication in general, the study of human communication as a significant human attribute. There is no easy definition of human communication. Is there a single act that constitutes communication and excludes other human traits and activities? Can we isolate communication from other forms of human social interaction?

Schramm put it succinctly when he said, "The difficulty in summing up a field like human communication is that it has no land that is exclusively its own. Communication is the fundamental social process." (3) As Porter and Roberts tell us, it is no different in the narrower study of communication in organizations. (4) There is a blurring of the lines between communication and other activities--leadership, interpersonal relationships and other events. This has not prevented investigations of merit, but it does not warn the student and practitioner of the qualified nature of results.

Some of the difficulty arising from this blurring of lines is in defining communication--the "act," the participants and episodes, the nature and qualities of the fact of communication. Schramm attempts to reduce the doubt by saying that communication is not just news, information or facts but "any content that reduces uncertainty or the number of alternative possibilities in a situation." (5)
Later he suggests another approach: the concept of communication as sharing "based on a relationship." (6)

This last would have drawn praise from John Dewey. A principal feature of the topography of his social thought is the concept of communication. Dewey says,

The heart of language is not "expression" of something antecedent, much less expression of antecedent thought. It is communication, the establishment of cooperation in an activity in which there are partners, and in which the activity of each is modified and regulated by the partnership. (7)

In Belman's view, the distillation of Dewey's thought here is that the ultimate reward of communication is community. (8) Belman restates Dewey: "In other words, a necessary but not sufficient condition of community is the presence of shared purposive action aimed at sustaining the beneficial outcomes of cooperative activity." (9)

Dewey's view adds to the philosophical foundation for study, but he does not clarify the nature of communication for the specific purpose of this study. We gain further understanding of the broader subject at hand from Lasswell's study, a catalog of the functions of social communication, as well as other examinations of how man and groups of men communicate. (10)

Dance attempts to come to grips with the problem of defining communication by grouping all major definitions into 15 principal themes--symbols/verbal/speech, understanding, interaction/relationship/social process, reduction of uncertainty, process, transfer/transmission/interchange, linking/binding, commonality, channel/carrier/means/route, replicating memories, discriminative response/behavior modifying/response/change, stimuli, intentional, time/situation and
power. His conclusion leaves him—and us—not too far from where he began: "It is difficult to determine whether communication is over-defined or under-defined but certainly its definitions lead the experimentalist, the historian, and the theoretician alike in different and sometimes contradictory directions." (11)

Communication in Organizations

Communication is an essential, if not fundamental, act in organizations. Fuller suggests that the act and function of communication depends on whether the association is formed out of or arises from a "shared commitment" as in a scientific research group or born of "the legal principle," that is, "held together and enabled by formal rules of duty and entitlement." (12)

Such duty or legal prescriptions of specific duties and goals might apply very well to state higher education coordinating agencies. While the law may provide clear guidance as to certain prescribed activities for organizations, it can also set minimal boundaries for them by inference or the force of authority. Without the clearer statement of need for community and communication born of voluntary association, the agencies and other legislatively created organizations might only be described by their creators and their environment, not by any natural function.

In the Maniya and Perrow frame of reference, such an agency would be a "reluctant organization" in an "aggressive environment." (13) That is, the agency would be a part of a community, not because of a natural need to gain the benefits of association with kindred organizations but because of a legal requirement to join.
The Maniha and Perrow study was of a Youth Commission in a city of 70,000 persons. The investigation, which reveals some parallels between the commission's life and that of some of the coordinating agencies, is an account of the origins and environment of the commission, "its search for a role, its utilizations by other groups and, finally, its emergence as an organization with an action role." (14) From its beginnings as a passive participant in its organizational environment, the commission was forced by its more aggressive environment to abandon a "weak and vulnerable mission" to assume a more energetic role with goals derived more from the needs of other bodies in the same societal galaxy than from its original, government-assigned mandate.

In spite of the great difficulty in finding significant patterns of meaning from the many studies of communication in organizations, scholars are drawn to such investigations. The lure seems evident. If communication is fundamental to human society, and organizations are the indispensable foundations of modern human society, the need is great to know what role communication plays in making organizations function effectively.

Burns studied executives in a British engineering factory by examining how they spent their time and with whom they communicated. In this study, communication was any face-to-face episode, letters, memoranda, drawings, telephone calls or nonverbal episodes--each determined by who participated with whom in each event recorded. While Burns' study is only tangentially pertinent to this investigation, it is of interest that even those involved did not perceive some activities as related to communication. As a group they overestimated time spent on
production and underestimated time spent with personnel, time spent in "absorption in internal problems of human relations." (15)

Others--Kelly (16), Dubin and Spray (17), Webber (18), Piersel (19), and Hinrichs (20), to name only a few--dwell largely on internal communication, those between employees, between subordinates and superiors, horizontal communication between employee segments or individuals. Their principal value here is that most of these mentioned call in question the perceptions by employees as to what activities are labelled communication, differences in perceptions of communication activities between subordinates and their supervisors. Raising the question does not answer it, but it does focus attention on the need to narrow the range of investigation to definable proportions.

Public Relations: Communication Rationale

The organizational role played by public relations activities does not make the acts of communication any easier to define, but public relations does offer a specific rationale for communication that is not as visible in studies of the behavior of executives or other employees in an organization.

Public relations as an identifiable management skill was born in the societal disruptions caused by the shift from an agrarian to an increasingly complex impersonal industrial society, in which nations are often more easily seen as large numbers of social groups, all fragments of the former whole.

Cutlip and Center remind us that:

We live in a world of fragments and factions forever splitting off, one against another. Consequently, we retreat into the protective arms of groups where, "we belong," where
we can find a sense of worth, of dignity. The result of this is not communication, but groups rebounding from groups. Our relationships with other human beings are conducted through organized groups, nation to nation, corporation to union, farm cooperative to the market. Fruitful public relations can play its part in meeting the intense psychological needs of man. It can also serve society by helping to bring about a sense of communion in an integrated community. (21)

This view of the public relations professional is far broader than the view of him as a generator of public notice—or notoriety, as the case might be. Cutlip and Center see professionalism as a key link in communication among "widely separate people and organizations" and the "PR" administrator as "more and more an interpreter of the complexities of his organization and less a publicist." (22)

Perhaps to the dismay of many journalists, who often hold public relations practitioners at arm's length as a philosophical if not personal opponent, Cutlip and Center also state the need for these public relations functions in government:

1. Win consent for new laws and reform
2. Overcome "apathy and bewilderment" at governmental complexities
3. Inform citizenry
4. Provide feedback channels
5. Interpret public opinion
6. Crystallize public sentiment
7. Build a reservoir of support (23)

Communication: Which Way? By Whom?

Grunig examined one-way manipulative communication and two-way informative communication of public relations practitioners; more importantly, he asked the question: "What relationship does the structure of the organization and the nature of its environment have with the activities of its public relations practitioners?" (24)
Obviously the best measure of an organization's intent and direction in public relations communications, regardless of the term assigned to the activity, is the presence of such professional communications employees on its staff and some clear concept of expectations from them.

The Conference Board provides one of the most complete catalogs of such personnel in its study of corporate management of external relations. This relatively small but detailed volume describes findings of a study of the roles of chief executive officers and communications staff of major American corporations. The study examines the roles of chief executive officers, external relations executives and other staff, their job descriptions, attitudes and perceptions of responsibilities, the decision making process, corporate public relations policies and corporate publics. (25)

This study never considers the public relations responsibility as an activity foreign to the corporate mission. As would be expected, it treats this corporate management responsibility as an accepted part of the management structure. Its objectives are to discover more about the presence and use of manpower and the emergence of trends in both management and issues, what the unnamed authors of the research report call "the evolving imperatives" (26) in the field of external relations.

The study may be useful in any of its voluminous statistical detail, but its authors do not give other researchers enough of that added dimension of the larger picture, conclusions drawn from pieces of the puzzle.

The data from questionnaires and interviews do give a clear view of the origins of the study in the business community's concern about its
own confidence crisis. Most chief executive officers cited distrust of the world of business and industry by the public at large as their greatest concern. They pointed to the public's lack of knowledge of the American economic system as the principal target of corporate communication.

Among the trends forecast by both chief executive officers and external relations executives is the increased emphasis by external relations staff on efforts to offset "government intervention" in corporate affairs, a phenomenon which they say nevertheless arises from the basic lack of credibility in the business community.

From this kind of data, the study points to the need for action on the part of both the chief executive officers and their external relations executives--in these areas:

* Improved communication skills for presidents and other chief executive officers

* Improved economic education programs conducted by external relations personnel

* Expanded community involvement

* Improved research to anticipate trends in both societal issue perception and the demands of the various corporate publics.

**Education Associations**

Although there are numerous such studies on the nature of and need for internal and external studies in the corporate world, it serves no useful purpose here merely to catalog them or to examine them. It is true that higher education has joined its brethren in the world of commerce in accepting public relations as an integral part of the tissue of
management, but coordinating agencies have just appeared on the scene in recent years. No major research efforts have been conducted on the public affairs role of such organizations specifically. There are some examinations of the role and impact of a few noninstitutional organizations which function with the support of some governmental professional authority. There are some broad comparisons, but we gain little of substance in seeing the real or potential public relations role of the state-created higher education coordinating agencies.

The Southern Regional Education Board is one of several regional agencies established by governors in each region—without legal authority but with an unenforced mandate to guide the governors in maintaining educational programs and policies that would meet the future needs of students and society in general and bolstered by sound research, good planning and efficient management.

Without the force of regulatory authority, some achievements have been made and chronicled by each of the three interstate planning-research organizations in the South, the West and New England. (27) Their numerous research reports point to valuable data gleaned by research. Other studies show broader results. In a 1968 report by the Southern Regional Education Board (28), the organization's impact over its first 20 years was examined, including its influence on the climate for support inside government, the results of that climate, and its impact on educational practices by institutions. But this report had no pretense to be a bona fide research study and its "conclusions" hardly more than a hint at the potential of such an examination.
The same applies to Andrews' look at the influence of foundations on education through grants, programs of other kinds and other means of influence. (29) While the impact on education of the Ford, the Carnegie and other foundations is widely known because of their financial support and their influence on policy, Andrews' and other such studies only show us glimpses of the total picture. None of these has examined the public affairs role of such massive organizations.

Bender and Simmons have also given us only a cursory look at the influence emanating from One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C., the address of the single building which serves as the national headquarters of the most influential higher education organizations in the United States including the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. Their 71-page study states its purpose as determining "the extent to which One Dupont Circle, popularly known as The National Center for Higher Education (NCHE), exerts influence upon the legislative, executive and bureaucratic processes affecting or effecting higher education policies and organization." (30)

However, these organizations maintain offices in the "center" as a base for lobbying as well as research and other functions. The study examines this activity and does not deal with the public relations activities of such organizations.

Heyns was president of the American Council on Education (ACE) when he wrote his 1973 analysis of "internal and external roles of the higher education associations in Washington," (31) their relations with the ACE, their own memberships and the federal government in an examination of the "national educational establishment." The study, all too brief,
barely touches on formal communication activities as a part of the
effort to improve higher education and serve society at large. Only
brief references are made to the need to increase "the sense of family
within higher education," a comment which seems to echo John Millett's
call for communications to "promote a sense of shared purpose." Only
briefly does the author discuss information flow and other communication

needs.

Heyns did crystallize much of the problem and need when he said:

The associations cannot be trusted transmitters in this
exchange if they are not knowledgeable about their educa-
tional institutions. In turn, vital relationships between
educational institutions and the supporting society cannot be
maintained if the needs and concerns of government are not
understood and transmitted clearly, sympathetically and
helpfully. (32)

The Role of News Media

There is a relatively small body of writing on the need for--and
often absence of--formal communication between news and other media and
educators in government or agencies of the government. Some go directly
to an examination of the public information practices being used.

Perhaps the best known of these is Stiles' national survey of edu-
cational public information programs in graduate schools, a study
conducted for Project Public Information, a federally supported program
designed to improve educational communication for improved public
understanding. In preparing his recommendation, Stiles stated these six
premises as philosophical pillars supporting the study.

1. Educational public information is a necessary and
   legitimate function in a democratic society.

2. Expert professional personnel, specialized beyond the
generalist level in either journalism or education, are required.
3. Chief educational officers and heads of school programs need orientation by experts to help them develop commitments, understand requirements, and plan for appropriate programs and personnel.

4. Relationships with commercial mass media should focus on ways to get information through to the various plural publics and, conversely, on ways to help the people make their views known to school officials.

5. Comprehensive approaches should include the cooperation of all--the total resources of institutions of higher education, members of the education and communication professions, government agencies at local, state and national levels, and philanthropic foundations.

6. Research is essential in providing direction, in refining programs of preparation, techniques of communication, and the selection of personnel, and in defining and resolving questions that are vital to the schools and the people. (33)

Stiles recommended:

1. Conducting a national conference to define problems and set the course toward improvements.

2. Development of pilot programs for education information specialists.

3. Encouragement and support by government agencies, foundations, mass media and higher education institutions for the improvement of educational information services.

4. The recognition of educational public information as a career speciality.

5. Development and encouragement of further research into the field.

Stiles' rationale for the study and his recommendations are well defined in the last paragraph of the report:

Specialists in education and communication, so long insulated from one another, must contribute to a new conceptualization of educational public information, making it an
attractive field for careers and recognizing it as a fertile field for research and scholarship. Such a synthesis will require commitment, expressed in concrete terms by school and media executives as well as universities and funding agencies. Then it may be hoped that the democratic obligation and the practical necessity for improved educational public information can be met. (34)

Stiles focused on the need for educational information services as a specialty area of communications, but Lance, in another Project Public Information study (35), put attention on the results of a communication gap between educators and mass media in statehouses around the nation. Specifically, the 1968 study examined the gap between news media and officials of state departments of education. The gap was explored primarily by means of research of attitudes and practices of members of the capital news corps in 35 states. While its insights are designed to assist state departments of education in policy development, such insights can be of value to other state education bodies, including the higher education coordination agencies which share some problems with the departments.

The Price of Isolation

Lance points out that the need for information by citizens of the land can no longer be met only by inquiring news reporters or the individual parent and taxpayer. The initiative should also come from educators, especially those in public office, governmental or institutional. "Logically, the improved communication necessary for a clearer understanding should be initiated by educators, not by aroused taxpayers who are experiencing a belated compulsion to 'search for the answers'," Lance writes. (36)
This may be particularly true for the state department of education where its identity is more obscure and its personnel and mission less well known by those in the general public who ultimately benefit from the department's policies and actions. Channels of communication to many of its audiences are not as easily established as they are for a neighborhood school or the one higher education institution in a city, a region or a state. The same applies to the coordinating agency.

Located in the capital, the department of education is physically removed from the majority of citizens it seeks to serve. Unlike the local school district, it cannot communicate as easily with parents through the student, local PTA or local news media. Most students do not even know that the state department exists, and only a few parents understand--much less appreciate--the role of the department. (37)

It is the nature of the activities of both the state department and the coordinating agency which makes communication both difficult and necessary. As Lance states, the state department does not provide tangible benefits which members of many audiences can identify as they can those of the departments of highways, welfare or natural resources.

"These two conditions--a physical isolation from the general public and the performance of intangible services--are compelling reasons for developing a strong relationship with the capital news corps," says Lance. (38)

It is significant that most of the capital newsmen applauded the concept of a professional communication professional on the state department of education staff to assist media representatives and to improve communication. But the survey showed that in practice, less than half of the identified information directors enjoyed a good working relationship with the newsmen.
A University of Tennessee study, although an investigation of public information practices in U.S. public school systems, also examines the need for formal external communication modes to reduce the effects of isolation of schools from large numbers of those they serve. The study--of a national sample of 441 school systems--is of limited value in that it only surveyed the practice of public information programs, defined as a one-way effort to disseminate information to large groups, mostly through mass media.

The University of Tennessee study is largely an investigation of useful mechanics of public information. Its recommendations included the use of information officers as a "boundary person between several groups, interpreting schools to the public, the public to school administrators, educators to journalists and the media to teachers and administrators" and the use of mass media to encourage feedback to education administrators and policy makers. (39)

Coordination: Regulation or Communication

Obviously, any study of the public relations role of the coordinat ing agencies would finally turn to that body of literature dealing directly with that narrow, specific field. Most of the attention given these agencies has been understandably focused on philosophical, political and administrative rationale underlying their emergence. But the communication needs of these unique organizations have not escaped the attention of some educational thinkers during this period.

At least one oblique and superficial attempt has been made to determine the presence and professional status of personnel of the agen cies, including public information staff. A few mention in passing the
specific public relations role of the organizations, but most deal
generally with the broad communication potential of such agencies.

The rationale for public relations activities in the agencies is
that shared by all of higher education. They can hardly avoid a role in
improving the image of higher education, especially in the heated com-
petition for diminishing financial resources and the search for
understanding by the public at large and key constituencies.

Minter and Snyder state the case well when they say:

Government officials must be persuaded that higher edu-
cation is fulfilling a major social need as recognized by the
political process if they are to provide increased appropri-
atations in support of colleges and universities. The voting
public as influenced by interest groups and by the media of
mass communication must also be supportive if executives and
legislators are to increase taxes and are to appropriate
larger sums of money for the benefit of higher education. (40)

If anything, that posture of responsibility has grown stronger
since those words were written. The question here is whether higher
education coordinating agencies, along with the institutions, should
play a role in closing the communication gap. The most common response
is that the agencies are largely regulatory and that this responsibility
gives little time or authority for such activities as public relations.

However, there is ample support for assigning public relations a
high priority in the administrative structure and philosophical goals of
the coordinating agencies. The idea has picked up support from many
sources, beginning as early as 1959 but gaining a real momentum in the
early and mid-1970s.

Glenny, whose concern was both the autonomy of individual institu-
tions and the task of coordinating higher education, quickly got into
the matter of the many needs for communication as an important leadership function.

In the first chapter of his widely read volume, Autonomy of Public Colleges: The Challenge of Coordination, Glenny wrote:

In its capacity as state planning agency for higher education, the coordinating or governing board could provide a powerful source of continuous leadership. It could be the spokesman for informing the public and the legislature of the function of higher education; it could explain the functions of research and service as well as instruction; it could identify and explain the role of each institution and show its individual contributions to education. The leadership possibilities of central agencies have been little exploited. (41)

One member of a coordinating board was quoted by Glenny as stating that the legally prescribed duties and economic restrictions on a state-supported body required a narrow, fiscally constrained approach to the agency's functions and staffing pattern.

Glenny's response: "The criticism is not that agencies fail to comply with statutory objectives but that they have not been legally required to plan and promote higher education as a principal goal." (42) That perception appears in the future concerns of those writers who spoke out later.

Smart advocates the use of a "repertoire of tools and strategies of influence" (43) that the agencies use in all of their other functions to assume a leadership role in speaking for higher education as a public resource and actively seeking support for it from the public at large, the governor, legislature and institutional leaders.

To date, most higher education coordinating agencies and governing boards with coordinating responsibilities have devoted themselves to activities which have allowed them to avoid fundamental questions involving the public interest in the operation of higher education. But because the agencies do in fact exist, and because they are already engaged in
influencing public policy development, they possess a potential for leadership which may be developed and used to good purpose. (44)

At the time of that statement, Smart saw higher education at a major crossroads and under pressure to make sound decisions in its own management if support for it from all quarters was to be forthcoming. What he said then impinges even more heavily today on decision makers searching for that support and understanding.

Smart stated:

If it is true that we are at the threshold of a major reassessment of the relationship of higher education to the society around it, and if the state higher education agency cannot be employed to any significant degree in the assessment of relationships, then a strong case may be made for discarding the higher education agency as we now know it. (45)

There is nothing more central to the mission of higher education public relations or institutional advancement than this concept of promoting and defending the crucial role that higher education plays in American society.

Forging Relationships

The following year Berdahl described how the agencies might establish means of formal contact and communication with certain constituencies other than legislators.

"Ideally, a coordinating agency would have a two-way communication network established with all major constituencies of universities and colleges: presidents and administrative officers, faculty, students and members of boards of trustees," he wrote. (46) He acknowledged, however, what is still a problem with the agencies today--the difficulty in actual practice of forging relationships with some of these groups.
It is especially troublesome where institutional autonomy is felt strongly, because easy relationships with the coordinating agency requires participants on both sides to assume something of a statewide view of management rather than an institutional view.

In spite of a kind of identity crisis on the part of the coordinating agencies, it is still held that they should occupy a key role as part government, part educational leader, part ombudsman in the public interest. It is the first of those roles that often arouses suspicion from one key constituency, the educational institutions they serve, the principal advocates of autonomy whose cooperation is crucial if the agencies are to succeed.

"Certainly coordinating agencies are not the favorites of the educational establishments and their staff," Johnson points out. "In fact they are often seen as threatening and described as another and useless 'layer of bureaucracy'--or as foot-in-the-door superboards." (47) The agencies fare little better in the eyes of the news media, she adds.

The press has generally exhibited a doubting Thomas attitude--although admitting that 'some kind' of coordination --and improvements in performance and accountability are urgent needs.

Occupying as they do a middle "no man's land" position between agencies and bureaucracies of state government on one hand and the powerful educational institutions and bureaucracies on the other, the chief job of coordinating agencies is to establish communication, cooperation, confidence and credibility with both. Their job is to recommend and advise, not govern.

Establishing credibility and demonstrable usefulness depends on the coordinating agency's perceptions of its roles and then of putting together a capable staff and key administrators who can work well with others, both inside and outside the educational establishment, and who have a keen sense of the political climate in both. (48)
Although some coordinating agencies have developed public relations programs with the clear idea of generating support through the mass media, we know very little of their success or the perceptions of their needs by executive officers or the public relations practitioners.

Rabin briefly described one effort at the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). The public relations role there is useful but limited, he says.

The public relations efforts of the superboards are extremely limited. The decisions of the boards are of little interest to the public or the media because the goals of a particular superboard and the institutions it represents are almost always the same. A board's small public relations staff usually concentrates on winning over legislators and public administrators. The public information officers help produce and distribute staff studies, planning documents and newsletters. They also assist with media contacts during the board meetings. And for the general public, they prepare one or two glossy publications explaining the state's system of higher education. (49)

Perhaps the limitations of the public relations effort is in the narrow perspective of Rabin and the THEC leadership rather than the media and other publics. Rabin jumped to a conclusion in stating that the boards' decisions are of little interest to the public. The fact that the busy capitol hill press corps gives the commission a low priority for coverage does not indicate the real value and importance of commission activities to many other key publics. It is also arguable that the coordinating agencies "represent" only the public higher education institutions in any state. Many public relations professionals would object to the limiting role of merely distributing reports and writing "one or two glossy publications."
But Rabin accepts the notion of the potential of the coordinating agencies. "Despite small public relations staffs, the superboards are clearly in a unique position to increase public understanding of higher education," he said. (50) He then describes one effort to analyse and translate technical reports for public consumption, assist the news media and organize a workshop for public relations officials of institutions throughout the state.

Communication needs are not limited to public relations in the traditional sense of the word, in the view of Callan and Jonsen. (51)

They suggest that the coordinating agencies, as a part of state government and therefore representing the people of the state, take on a "consumer protection" role. A better term might be "consumer advocacy."

A second role would be the urging of increasing responsiveness of institutions to consumers. Despite the various roles that have developed during the emergence of the coordinating agencies, "their development has important implications for consumer protection and information." (52)

Since the agencies are not enmeshed in the day-to-day problems of administering directly to consumers of higher education and the maintenance of internal stability, the agencies will be in a better position to pursue external goals to serve the consumer and all citizens of the state, Callan and Jonsen say.

For example, one common ingredient in the subordination of consumer interests to those of other institutional members (faculty, administrators, and other decision makers) is the gradual weakening of communication to and from students. The essence of the consumer movement in postsecondary education is an attempt to strengthen these weakened lines of communication.
State coordinating agencies are particularly able to facilitate this improvement. (53)

Regardless of the type of communication effort devised for key publics of higher education, some agencies are becoming more aware of the broad need to establish improved communication capability.

In Ronis' study of both administrators and members of the board of the Ohio Board of Regents, one question put to both groups was: "Do the performances of any formal activities that the OBR engages in need to be improved?". In response, the one item most frequently mentioned was the "need to develop better communication networks in a variety of areas." (54)

Based on interviews, Ronis made five recommendations. The first was: "The Ohio Board of Regents should establish a much more intensive communication program from the higher education community to the people of the State and internally within the higher education community and within the Board."

Mautz examines the possibilities that the coordinating agencies will continue in the future with expanded responsibilities. (55) It is too soon to speculate if the larger role will include increased formal communication activities. But THEC is established, although with varied and often muted identities. Regardless of what new responsibilities may be identified, the depth and breadth of higher education's present and future service to society should be considered the bedrock of its assigned tasks.

Balderston put it this way:

Finally, there is the deepest problem of all: for statewide boards to redefine in publically persuasive ways, the contributions that higher education should be expected
to make to its publics and to elicit the essential public support and understanding. (56)

The central thrust of the literature relative to statewide higher education coordinating agencies supports communication—from information to advocacy—as crucial to their task, both when they act as an arm of government responsible to the electorate and as an organization responsible for the regulation of higher education. In fact, many among the diverse educators and other professionals speak specifically against regulation becoming the primary focus of the agencies.

Broadly, these writings—from Stiles in 1967 to Henry in 1983—point to the need for communication, notably public relations as a specific communication effort, as a crucial administrative function with defined outcomes. The totality of these readings constitute a model on which any coordinating agency might build its organization's structure and its philosophical mission.
Chapter Bibliography


6. Ibid.


9. Ibid.


32. Ibid.


50. Ibid.


CHAPTER III

CARRYING OUT THE STUDY

If the communicating and coordinating skills and insight of the public relations professional had played or should play a role in the mission of a state higher education coordinating agency, surely that role would manifest itself in the perceptions of those who establish its policies, administer its programs and shoulder responsibility for observing the law which created the agency. Surely those perceptions would paint some portrait of that public relations role—past, present and future. This study began with the assumption that those two ideas were true.

National Survey Considered

A broad national survey of the entire population of statewide coordinating agencies was first considered as the best possible strategy of investigation. A detailed questionnaire, one to be sent to the chief executive officer of each higher education coordinating agency, was considered to be the best data-gathering instrument in terms of the potential results and the practicality of the logistics of such an inquiry. As such a questionnaire was being drafted, the investigator sought the help of Dr. T. Edward Hollander, Chancellor of the New Jersey Board of Higher Education, then president of the State Higher Education Executive Organization (SHEEO), the professional association of higher education
coordinating and governing board executives. The investigator's letter to Dr. Hollander requested official SHEEO sanction of the research effort, stating the usefulness of forthcoming data as cornerstone information for both the coordinating agencies as well as the doctoral investigation. Dr. Hollander replied that he would only notify members of SHEEO that such a questionnaire would be forthcoming.

Feeling the necessity of a high rate of return of such questionnaires to assure validity, the investigator decided that without sanction, he would not risk the investment of time and effort for possibly weak return with inadequate results. This course also might have left open the possibility of the questionnaire being assigned to someone other than the chief executive officer of each responding coordinating agency. This would have defeated or damaged a central objective since perceptions of the administrative staff were the principal focus of the study at that stage. Another course of action—the case study—was considered.

The Case Study Justified

There are advantages and disadvantages to the case study. Obviously a broad national study could provide a detailed composite, a national profile of practices and attitudes, but the case study could focus more closely on the real world. In the on-site investigation there are some good gains, some losses. In the case study, Kerlinger tells us "there is usually so much noise in the communication channel that even though the effects may be strong and the variance great, it is not easy for the experimenter to separate the variables," yet, he adds, the realism of such a study is undeniable. "Of all types of studies,
they (case studies) are the closest to real life. There can be no
complaint of artificiality." (1)

The case study is well defined by Van Dalen as "an intensive
investigation of a social unit." (2) In such an inquiry, the
researcher uses a similar technique to that of social workers and
counsellors. Yet, in such a systematic inquiry, the goal is not
diagnosis of a singular condition but an exhaustive study of a represen-
tative type of the designated social unit, he explains.

"A generalization drawn from a single case or a few casually
selected ones cannot be applied to all cases in the country or world,"
said Van Dalen, "but a negative piece of evidence produced in a single
case will alert the investigator to the possibility that he may need to
modify his hypothesis." (3) Such a study then could provide a foun-
dation upon which to build later. A case study seemed advisable as an
initial course into this vastly unexplored area of concern. This course
was elected.

While results of such a study unit could not be applied strictly to
others, there seemed a clear need to determine some general reference
points, some indications of where THEC lay along the spectrum of results
assembled from the other 28 coordinating agencies.

A National Perspective

If perceptions of the nature of the ones gathered in this investi-
gation had been assembled from a national study, as originally planned,
the results might have taken on a different character, although without
the depth of the closer look afforded by the case study. Still, feeling
the need for a modified national view, the investigator sought some
basic information from all 29 higher education coordinating agencies, identified from a published list (4) of both statewide coordinating and governing boards. The 29 states identified as having coordinating agencies were Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wyoming.

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) sought such data as the number of institutions coordinated, the total enrollment of those institutions, the statewide resident population, the agency operating budget, the annual expenditures for higher education, the total number of employees, the number of public relations professionals, the salaries of the public relations professionals, etc.

In preparing the questionnaire, there was one initial consideration—the length of the instrument. To encourage prompt and complete reply, the instrument was restricted to a little more than two pages. Such data were intended to provide a broad spectrum in the context of which others might see the data from a case study.

However, the design of the survey instrument also sought in those data certain aspects common to other coordinating organizations. In one major instance, the investigator felt that higher or lower operating budgets in an agency or greater or lesser public higher education expenditures might influence the presence or absence of public relations professionals on the staff of any of the coordinating agencies, thus providing some basis for comparison.
In addition to the other data, the questionnaire sought some commonality in the area of the agencies' authority in such matters as setting its operating budgets, recommending educational programs and licensing new institutions.

In seeking some measure of a national composite, the survey instrument was designed for response by any of a number of top administrative officers with access to the basic data sought. It sought no perceptions of values, directions, administrative styles or other similar matters. It was designed only for response by employed administrators of the coordinating organization and not from members of policy-setting groups.

The questionnaire was mailed in September of 1978 to all 29 coordinating organizations. During the month of October, 28 of the agencies returned the completed questionnaire—a 96.5 percent return. Only Wyoming failed to respond. A follow-up letter was mailed to Wyoming but no response was made and this part of the data gathering was concluded.

The Case Study Carried Out

In the months preceding the mailing of the national composite questionnaire, selection of a site for a case study was made easier when the investigator accepted an offer as director of university relations for The University of Tennessee Center for the Health Sciences in Memphis. The investigator requested, by letter, cooperation of Dr. Wayne Brown, executive director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, whose headquarters are in Nashville, the state capitol, some 200 miles northeast of Memphis. The request for cooperation was approved.
Once the case study approach had been chosen, the investigator felt the best overall results would be achieved if findings were to arise primarily from the perceptions of those in the best position to influence the policies and day-to-day practices of THEC.

An interview schedule (see Appendix B) was designed to elicit data in personal interviews from individuals in two groups:

1. The chief executive of the THEC and his professional administrative staff, including his public relations personnel. The term "professional" designates those who are assigned program or staff responsibility, as contrasted with secretarial or other support personnel.

2. Members of the Commission, all appointed by the governor, whose terms were in effect at the time of the interviews.

The population of this study was the total body of the two groups. Because of the small number of the population, the study embraced the entire population rather than a sample.

Because of the nature of this investigation as a case study, typical pilot testing was not possible, but to produce results as accurate and free of misunderstanding as possible, a critical review of the instrument was conducted in the months prior to the interviews of both staff and commissioners. The original interview instrument was revised three times in an effort to improve terminology, eliminate repetitious questions and clarify concepts. This third version was then critically examined by Douglas Norman, Ed.D., director of information services for the University of Tennessee statewide system; Burl Gilliland, Ed.D., professor of educational psychology at Memphis State University; and
Fred Bellott, Ed.D., director of the Bureau of Educational Research at Memphis State University.

The reviews of the instrument by Dr. Norman and Dr. Gilliland were in the nature of an examination to assess the effectiveness of the interview schedule in terms of attention (Does the message attract and hold the audience?), comprehension (Is the message clearly understood?...the main ideas conveyed?), personal relevance (Does the target audience perceive the message to be meaningful?), and acceptability (Is there anything in the message considered possibly offensive or unacceptable to future respondents. The review by Dr. Bellott was in fact a pilot run, Dr. Bellott playing the role of either a THEC professional staff person or a commissioner. He was asked to respond to the questions to the best of his knowledge or experience. After the test, he was asked to identify any weaknesses in terminology, design or other aspects of the interview schedule.

Dr. Gilliland made no recommendations for change. Dr. Norman made a number of suggestions as to terminology or wording in general and expressed concern that the open-ended questions might undermine validity of final results. Some of the language suggestions were incorporated into a revised interview schedule. No changes were made in the open-ended questions because the investigator felt that the responses might be of value in the study. Dr. Bellott completed the interview in about 45 minutes. He made no suggestions for change.

The interview schedule sought to establish briefly the subject's main area of professional, business or other aspects of his or her public life in Tennessee. Otherwise, specific concerns addressed in the
questions were subject's perceptions of THEC's role, constituencies, vehicles of communication, channels of communication, public awareness of higher education problems, subject's perceptions on the need for communication as part of THEC's responsibilities, public relations as a profession in general and as a communications tool in higher education, roles public relations had played in THEC and might play in the future and other related matters.

In its final form, the interview schedule included a variety of questions, including yes-no, rank order, graded scale and a number of open-ended questions. The schedule was designed to achieve a mixture of demographics and perception data.

Using hindsight, the investigation might have produced results in greater depth and breadth if each respondent had been asked to fill out a questionnaire with the short-response questions only. This would have then reserved the personal interview time for responses to questions seeking responders' perceptions. This approach is suggested for subsequent research in this area.

A broad objective was to ascertain each subject's general perceptions about the appropriateness of communications to and from various constituencies by means of a public relations program, the appropriateness of such activities in higher education, their appropriateness in THEC specifically and the suitability of public relations professionals to conduct such programs.

Interviews with members of the THEC administrative staff were conducted at the agency's offices at 501 Union Building in Nashville in two
days of interviews arranged by appointment in September, 1979. Each interview required 45-60 minutes.

In the summer of 1981, data gathering was delayed by a serious arm injury to the investigator. Research did not resume until the summer of 1982. In July of that year, the investigator appeared before the THEC in official session at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville to request permission to interview members of the Commission for the purposes of this dissertation research.

These interviews with commissioners were intended to be face-to-face in the hometowns of each member. Before the interviews could be scheduled, the investigator developed another medical condition which prohibited travel to these widely scattered locations in Tennessee. Requests were made to each commissioner for telephone interviews instead of face-to-face as planned. Each agreed.

In October, 1982, the investigator's secretary made appointments with each commissioner for the telephone interview, seven in the last week of October and two in the first week of November. At the time the requests were made, it was also requested that an hour be set aside from the commissioner's professional work schedule to permit an uninterrupted interview. All complied. The investigator also assured no interruptions by taking annual leave during the time of each interview. The calls were placed from the Office of University Relations, 406 Hyman Building, The University of Tennessee Center for the Health Sciences. Each interview required 45-60 minutes.
Chapter Bibliography


CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The National Profile

Observations of similarity or clear contrast between agencies are generally possible in data about budgets, size of staff, numbers of public relations professionals on the staff and other such matters. These can be seen in the chart below. Other data are not so easily seen and charted. Some organizations coordinate all higher education in some manner, including at least an advisory role to include private institutions. Most coordinate the majority of state-assisted post-secondary educational institutions, although each operates with a variety of differences in each case. An advisory role with private (or independent) institutions is common in some but in others, such as Maryland and Michigan, the responsibility is more official and clearcut. In New Hampshire, all higher education is coordinated by the designated coordinating body. Licensure authority varies widely. In each state there is a slight difference in authority, types of institutions and other levels of observations—enough to discourage comparison and contrast and interpretation.

Data gathered from the 28 responding coordinating agencies are shown in Table 1 in a format of the highest figure reported, the lowest, the mean of the 28 respondents and the figure reported by THEC. (State-by-state data is presented in Appendix C.)
TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF NATIONAL DATA
(28 of 29 Coordinating Agencies Responding)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>THEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. Institutions</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment*</td>
<td>1,560</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Population*</td>
<td>21,500</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4,070</td>
<td>4,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget for State-assisted Institutions (approx. millions)</td>
<td>4,918,000</td>
<td>27,500</td>
<td>565,610</td>
<td>421,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Budget* (operating funds only)</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>9,517</td>
<td>1,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Employees</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No. PR Professionals: (Fifteen (15) agencies reported no public relations professionals on staff; 13 reported at least a half-time employee performing public relations duties. Eight (8) of those 13 agencies reported one (1) person assigned to such duties full-time. THEC reported two (2), each working half-time.)

Salaries of Top PR Officers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>No. Reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>$25,000 plus</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>20,000-24,999</td>
<td>5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>15,000-19,999</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 000's omitted
** including THEC

THEC is below the mean in every category but one in the national profile data, as are six of the other seven Southern states with statewide coordinating agencies. Populous Texas is the exception. (Other Southern states are Louisiana, Virginia, Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky and South Carolina.) Yet THEC's reported two employees assigned part-time to public relations duties places Tennessee above the national median point of agencies reporting at least a half-time employee so assigned. Tennessee is typical among those Southern states' coordinating
organizations with regard to employees assigned to public relations duties, there being four reporting none and four reporting at least a half-time employee so assigned. The notable exception among the Southern states was Louisiana, unique in the South and one of only three nationally--including Michigan and California--reporting two professionals engaged full-time in public relations duties. No agency reported more than two. THEC was one of two agencies nationally which, if there were personnel assigned to public relations duties, assigned them to the task "part-time."

In the matter of "half-time" and "part-time" personnel, one can only speculate on the designated division of time to be devoted to public relations. Such an arrangement also raises questions as to the clarity of the employee's job description, the organizations' definitions of "public relations" and the expectations of how those duties would give way to other duties without reducing effectiveness in communication.

Responses to questions about numbers of public relations professionals and salaries revealed some basic data and some unexpected insight into other pertinent matters. Some data produced more questions than answers, for a number of reasons, chief among them these:

* The investigation did not anticipate the employment of any individual to take on public relations responsibilities part-time.

* Titles, like job descriptions, usually based on any organization's special definition of public relations, are too often a hindrance to the grasp of what is actually being done in a coordinating agency--as in any other corporate entity. This whole matter is a window to the
struggle the public relations profession has long waged for an improved "PR" image of itself and against its own "crisis of public confidence."

The data first produced an overlap in the reporting of salaries. While 15 agencies reported no public relations professionals on their payrolls, 19 responded to the question about salaries. Some who said they had no public relations professionals still reported the salary range of its primary public relations professionals.

Such an overlap is understandable in the context of basic principles that (a) the chief public relations official in any organization is its chief executive officer and (b) that all employees, especially those in leadership positions, practice a kind of broad public relations role, i.e., playing the role of promoting good relations with many important publics. While those concepts present a valid notion of part of an organization's image and substance, the reporting of such information indicates some mistaken notions about public relations as an identifiable administrative identity. While some individuals may supply important impressions and transmit useful data to its numerous information-consuming publics, they are not the "public relations professionals" the wording of the questionnaire sought. In that brief instrument, the investigator also anticipated that the term "professional" would sufficiently distinguish the employees with specific training and experience in the identifiable occupational category of "public relations" from others supervising the professionals or playing a role in the public relations-communication process without the professional identity.
Interestingly, four of the agencies reported no public relations professionals on the payroll but then reported that their chief public relations professionals held titles of "assistant director," "director of special programs and community service," "director of publications/special programs," and "deputy director."

Title of the primary public relations professionals and designated assistants employed by the 13 agencies reporting at least one such individual are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Chief PR Officer</th>
<th>Assistant(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ky.</td>
<td>Coordinator of Public Information</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash.</td>
<td>Assistant to the Executive Coordinator</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calif.</td>
<td>Director, Government and Public Affairs</td>
<td>Assistant to the Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conn.</td>
<td>Special Assistant to the Commissioner</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ill.</td>
<td>Admin. Asst. to the Executive Director</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La.</td>
<td>Assistant Commissioner for Administration</td>
<td>Editorial and Legislative Assistant, Departmental Informational Representative II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minn.</td>
<td>Manager of Communications</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mich.</td>
<td>Assistant Superintendent for Public Affairs</td>
<td>Public Information Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.J.</td>
<td>Confidential Assistant to the Chancellor</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Public Information Officer</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okla.</td>
<td>Assistant to the Chancellor for Communications Services</td>
<td>Assistant to the Communication Officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Texas  Assistant Director for Special Studies
None

13. Tenn.  Assistant Director for State and Federal Relations (THEC)
Public Information Assistant

*(This title has since been changed to "Educational Specialist."

It is probable that the size of the statewide higher education budget, state resident population or individual agency budget may explain the absence or presence of public relations personnel, of whatever stripe, on coordinating agency payrolls. Such presence or absence might then have indicated the agency's perceptions of need for a more expansive communication effort managed by public relations professionals. The hypothesis was tested among the 13 reporting at least one public relations staff member using as criteria the "national" average of all the coordinating agencies reported in responses to questions 2-9 and 13--number of institutions, the statewide residential population, numbers of students in coordinated institutions, budgets for state-assisted higher education and number of employees. The results reveal that out of the 13 states reporting at least one public relations practitioner, the following numbers registered on or above the national agency mean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Reporting 1 or more in PR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. Institutions</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>285,000</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>4,100,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State HE Budget</td>
<td>$565,000,000</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Budget</td>
<td>$1,200,000</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To see another perspective of the same picture, states which reported outright no public relations professionals on their staff were
examined as to the range of numbers reported in these same categories. They covered the spectrum—from $450 million in statewide appropriations for higher education to $27 million; from operating budgets of $1.1 million to a little under $70,000; from 26 employees to 4.

Among the 13 reporting one or more employees assigned to public relations duties, they ranged from the six with the highest enrollment to one of the nation's low-population states with a statewide higher education budget only half the national average and $100 million below that of THEC. The lower-population state (Louisiana) was one of only three among the 28 with two designated public relations professionals on the administrative staff. By contrast, the state which accounts for the greatest number of institutions, the highest enrollment, the highest state population and the third highest agency budget reported only two public relations practitioners.

Yet funding available to an agency might have a greater influence than these data indicate, although still not being the dominant factor. Four state agencies provided insufficient data for a complete breakdown by funds specifically allocated for administering the agency (without reporting "pass through" funds from state and federal sources). Using the numbers of employees--i.e., payroll--as a guideline as to agency budget, there is a suggestion that the number of "PR" oriented agencies above the national average might have been at least 11. This would not suggest a philosophy of "more money, more PR," but it might add some additional weight in that direction. In the case of THEC, comments from commissioners and staff suggested a willingness to add to the budget for public relations, but they also held to a broad feeling that public
relations would have to be justified before they would approve more funding for public relations as an administrative effort in higher education.

While unifying threads among all coordinating agencies—the need in each of them for economy of societal resources and a greater unity of societal purpose—are far from vivid in the national profile, this composite of 28 of them provides some suggestions of commonality, a context in which to view the data of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission case study. At once, the great numbers of students and institutions (not to speak of numbers of faculty, other employees and other governing boards involved) suggest the immensity of the task of coordinating public higher education in most states. In those states where private institutions are a part of the process, the task would obviously become even greater.

Among the specific details seen in the tapestry of the national profile are the broad range of numbers of employees assigned to carry out the task of coordination in each state, including the number of public relations personnel. No more than two were even employed in these positions in any one state, regardless of the size of the agency's operating budget and regardless of the communication needs suggested in the coordinating organizations, certainly in the larger programs. If the assignment of public relations personnel is not directly related to the size of the operating budget, there is the suggestion that assignments of such professionals is a matter left to the individual perceptions of that part of the task by the agencies' chief executive officer and governing boards.
Now that we have examined some of the significant available data on coordinating agencies in the states in which such organizations have been established, we will next examine one such agency in the light of the perceptions of its staff and commissioners as to its appropriate public relations roles.

The Case Study Research Instrument: Six Broad Areas

There are many means by which public relations or any other communication activity in the Tennessee Higher Education Commission might be examined and reported. It was not the intent of this investigation to conduct a comprehensive study of such activities. Instead, it was the intent to explore the practices and potential for a public relations program as part of THEC's basic mission as seen through the eyes of those persons in the best position to effect such activities or to strive for any perceived potential—members of the Commission itself and its employed staff.

The central aim of this study was to explore their perceptions in regard to THEC's use of and potential for public relations as a means to improve public understanding of the higher education programs and institutions the agency was created to coordinate. Underlying the study was this question: Given the documented public relations role among colleges and universities in improving public understanding of higher education, might there be some similar role for THEC?

Interviews were conducted with:

1. The nine members of the THEC administrative staff, those persons hired to design and implement the programs arising from the
policies set forth by the Commission, hereinafter referred to as "staff," "members of the staff," or "staff members."

2. The nine members of the Commission, each appointed to a nine-year term by the present or past governors to set the policies according to the 1967 law which created THEC. They will be referred to as "commissioners" or "members of the Commission."

Similarities and differences in the responses between the groups will be reported in these findings in narrative and descriptive form and several numerical presentations.

The research instrument is focused on six broad areas of concern:

1. (Question 1): Respondents' professional backgrounds. This was not designed to elicit complete demographic data, only broad indications of the professional origins or experiences of each respondent.

2. (Questions 2-4): Respondents' perceptions of roles THEC has played in the past and should play in the future.

3. (Questions 5-6): Respondents' perceptions regarding "publics" or constituencies served by THEC and in return serving the Commission.

4. (Questions 7-9): Respondents' knowledge and perceptions of the tools and channels of communication practiced by or available to THEC.

5. (Questions 10-16): Respondents' knowledge, awareness or perceptions of any widespread diminution of public understanding and support of education (higher education specifically), commonly identified as a "crisis of public confidence."

6. (Questions 17-25): Respondents' knowledge or perceptions of the profession of public relations, its function in society and education and possible roles it has played or might play in the affairs of THEC.
The following is an account of the responses in the framework of the aforementioned broad areas of concern.

Respondents' Background

Staff - Here are brief cameos of each respondent on the administrative staff:

* After several years as an adult proprietary program director in Louisiana, the individual began and remained in a career in higher education, all of it in central administration of higher education institutions or THEC.

* Nine years of public school teaching in the elementary grades preceded this administrator's move to higher education to a career thereafter totally in a central administration position, including this one with THEC.

* A younger member of the staff had been a copy editor with the Nashville Banner (an afternoon daily newspaper) prior to her work with THEC. She is the daughter of a prominent Tennessee newspaper reporter.

* Another staff member had been a faculty member at the University of Tennessee at Nashville (no longer in existence) prior to taking a central administration position at the institution then moving to THEC.

* One administrator had the most varied pre-THEC background of any of the nine, including experiences as an administrator in government, a bank officer, an administrative assistant in manufacturing and "in the music industry" briefly.

* Four of the nine THEC staff had only experience in central administration of higher education, including that with THEC.
Of the nine administrators interviewed, four were female. No data was obtained on the ages of men and women, but informal observation would indicate all nine staff ranged from the mid-20s to the upper 40s. No data concerning their geographical origin was sought. Eight of the nine were white; one was black.

Commissioners - Brief descriptions of the members of the Commission are as follows:

* Had 31 years experience in business and industry and had received "some exposure to higher education," indicating this meant personal education and general awareness of school boards and other aspects of public education as a citizen and businessman.

* Organized a business (a funeral home) in 1916, served on a public school board for four years and had been elected vice-mayor of his hometown. He had attained two years of college education.

* Spent all of his life in business, much of it in insurance.

* A homemaker who had once taught history in the public schools of Kentucky and other subjects in Tennessee for four years. Later she began an extensive civic involvement which included her THEC and other experiences.

* Businessman with commercial interests throughout Tennessee.

* Attorney; membership on the board of trustees of a private elementary school for eight years, three as chairman.

* Attorney; experience only as a THEC commissioner, his first nine-year term beginning in 1971, his second in 1980.

* Attorney; public service has included several years on the governor's cabinet, elected to the City Council of a metropolitan
government, and prominent life in city and statewide politics and many years associated with top levels of influence. He has served as president of a public school board of education and on the board of trustees of a prestigious four-year liberal arts college.

* Businessman; background in communication.

In geographic terms, much of the Commission's makeup is dictated by the THEC charter which requires three members be appointed from each of the state's grand divisions (west, middle and east). Otherwise, the Commission included:

Gender: One woman, eight men.

Professional Life: Four lawyers, four businessmen and one homemaker active in civic affairs. The lone woman had previously been a public school teacher.

Formal Education: Eight respondents had earned at least a four-year baccalaureate degree; one had attended college for two years.

Civic Service to Education: In addition to THEC service, five had spent several years in elective or appointive positions to policy-making bodies in private and public education.

Racial Composition: Eight white; one black.

Perceptions of Purpose

In explaining their perceptions of THEC's primary purpose, seven of nine members of the staff designated coordination of academic and fiscal activities of higher education in Tennessee. By comparison, Commission members made a more fragmented response although four of nine designated equity of funding among all higher education institutions.
Here are the responses (first choices only):

**Staff -**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordination of academic and fiscal activities</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review and approval of programs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection and distribution</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commissioners -**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To assure equity in funding among institutions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination between institutions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve academic programs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal liaison between institutions and the legislature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove higher education from the legislative process</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish standards and policies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While many of the terms chosen by individual respondents took the form of an all-embracing term such as "coordination" (a kind of general articulation of many kinds and levels of programs), staff responses did focus on coordination as a kind of fiscal and academic efficiency, i.e., making things "work better." In contrast, the tenor of the one major bloc of Commission responses had the air of a political commentary. Equity points straight to a major issue during the conception and birth of THEC in 1967 amid an intense political battle for a more equitable allocation of state resources among the institutions.
Both THEC and the State Board of Regents were created as part of a changing political climate during the years preceding. Historically, the office of the Governor had wielded greater statewide power than the General Assembly. That imbalance was shifting strongly toward the legislature at the time the issue of coordination of higher education came to the forefront. Coordination meant the efforts to bring under control the proliferation of higher education programs and facilities as the massive post-war infusion of federal and state funds slowed sharply each year. Some less influential institutions of higher learning (some newly established) felt the increasing need for a greater share of the higher education fiscal pie, long dominated by The University of Tennessee, a powerful statewide land-grant institution. Other campuses joined hands and rode the wave of the General Assembly's newly acquired power. Indeed, they became a strong ally to the legislature in its successful bid for greater influence.

The responses of the staff provide a rough sketch of the administrator making the program work, making the engine run more efficiently on less fuel. The commissioners' responses reflect the nature of each commissioner's appointment as a lay citizen, an appointee of a past or incumbent governor and an individual from a designated region of the state. Each response reflects more of an attitude of "take care of the folks back home" who still would like to see improved funding for their community college or their regional four-year institution.

Other Roles for THEC

Secondary roles designated included various forms of coordination, program review, fiscal review, achieving parity with higher education in
neighboring states, maintaining a master plan, and avoidance of duplication in services and programs.

In Question No. 3, respondents were asked for further perceptions of roles suitable for or necessary to the best operation of THEC. This was a second opportunity for respondents to indicate some feeling for communication as a role, not just as a fundamental societal function but as something more clearly defined, such as an exercise in community awareness, a professional public relations effort or at least an acknowledgement of the organization's information program which represents one of the eight equal goals or purposes of the law creating THEC.

The responses follow:

**Staff -**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishment and maintenance of a master plan of fiscal and academic programs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination of private institutions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison between state and federal governments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An information and advisory source for both legislature and executive branch</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching and distributing higher education studies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokesman for the Commission</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commissioners -**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide stability to higher education in Tennessee</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide research information to legislative and executive branches</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Commissioners - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy of the needs and</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contributions of higher education in the state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring about harmony between</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the University of Tennessee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the Board of Regents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of a funding formula</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring of the funding</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process to assure equity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of THEC's master plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among other answers given to Question No. 3, five of the staff and two of the commissioners did specify activities suggesting the need for some kind of communication program as more than a passive effort to distribute information. Those designated included "two-way communication," advocacy of the needs of higher education, and a public information program about the opportunities available in higher education.

Only those respondents who had not designated in any way some kind of active public information program as important in some way to THEC were then asked Question No. 4 a. ("Do you think communication is a proper role for THEC?"). Communication was defined as "any planned program to reach a variety of constituencies, or publics, with predetermined messages about the problems, needs and achievements of higher education in Tennessee. The planned program would include establishment and maintenance of channels for receiving messages from those same publics.")
The responses of the four staff and the seven commissioners follow:

Staff -

Yes, communication (as defined) 3
is a suitable role for THEC 3
Undeclared or unsure 1

Commissioners -

Yes 5
No 1
Undeclared or unsure 1

THEC's Publics

Respondents were asked to name, in rank order, the most important publics or constituencies served by THEC and in turn serving THEC's needs. Their first, second and third choices follow:

Staff -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main THEC Publics</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Totals if Weighted</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THEC Commission</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislature</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Branch</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Public</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing Boards (University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, State Board of Regents)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commissioners -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main THEC Publics</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Totals if Weighted</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislature</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Branch</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Public</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing Boards</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adding weighting factors to the responses clarifies the perceptions of both groups, at least on the first four choices. (Weights added were values of "3" for each first choice, "2" for second and "1" for third.

The contrast of the ranking of the legislative and the executive branches removes any doubt of the overwhelming fealty of THEC employees and commissioners to the General Assembly, dominant parent of THEC.

Both groups were in strong agreement in designating the legislature as THEC's primary public.

Were there other important THEC publics unserved, members of each group were asked, with these responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Commissioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Gov't</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| None          | 7            |
| St. Rd. Educ. | 1            |
| Business and  | Industry     |

Members of the Commission seem clearly satisfied that there are no additional publics to be served, in contrast to the staff's strong majority feeling that there are others to be reached to achieve the goals of THEC along with the primary publics already designated. There are no sharply defined explanations for this, especially in light of the fact that the legislature is identified as the main public by both groups. Yet it does not seem an unreasonable expectation for the commissioners—accustomed to new and changing "markets" or "publics" usually attended carefully in their lives in business, industry, the
professions and community service—to identify additional horizons in the form of future publics to be identified and nurtured.

The staff response points to greater awareness of this idea perhaps reflecting their own lives as educators, first of all knowable of public relations activities in the institutions they coordinate or even reflecting the teacher's trained and practiced ways in finding new ways to reach and teach new groups of individuals. Their backgrounds make designation of students and faculty obvious choices as among tomorrow's publics in the eyes of the staff.

Still, at this point the observer can see the beginning signs of a pattern in both groups of a kind of contentment with the status quo. It could even point to that isolation described by Lance in his study, an isolation from other groups important to the nourishment and growth of governmental groups such as THEC and a state department of education, units which provide only an intangible service to the world around it.

**Tools and Channels of Communication**

Respondents were asked to identify principal vehicles or types of communication used by THEC in the past to reach its publics. They were not asked to rank order them or give any weight to their responses. Each respondent was allowed multiple responses. The responses are tallied in that fashion, recording those mentioned along with the number of times any given channel or vehicle of communication was mentioned. A check list was provided orally during the interview as reminders but they were asked to identify any other. The responses:
Here that pattern of contentment seems reinforced by the indication of both groups that personal contact, meetings and technical studies are the principal channels and tools of communication under the direct control of THEC to carry out its mission. Communication by means of the news media were accorded second and third rankings, high enough to indicate their importance but also high enough to indicate a dependence on them.

Following this, the question was: "Are there any channels or vehicles of communication being overlooked which might improve communication by THEC with its publics?" The responses:

**Staff -**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel/Type</th>
<th>Times Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More communication with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>governing boards</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More publications</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special newsletters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-subject issue papers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More outreach to general public</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among staff, although only four declared outright that there were no communication channels to find or design, the other five were too scattered to glean a feeling of direction, energy or intent. This is difficult to interpret in light of the staff's previously stated interest in reaching additional publics. Typically, a group would identify a public and then develop a new or old channel to reach it. It is not difficult to grasp the commissioners' collective feeling.

Attention turned to channels for receiving communication from those publics served by and serving THEC. "Is adequate attention given to this?" respondents were asked. The responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Commissioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the surest signs of individual or group interest in and commitment to communication is in the development of clear channels for communication from the constituency, channels which have at least minimal potential for indicating if outward communication is suitable in content and focused properly. A majority of the staff and nearly all of the commissioners were satisfied that adequate attention was given to
"feedback" communication. Yet the channels identified for this purpose were so scattered and without focus as to indicate a sparsity of thought about the matter. Responses to the next question lends support to that idea.

Respondents were asked to identify perceived channels of receiving communication from various publics—without a structured question. They were asked to identify channels. The responses, which follow, show channels and the number of times each was mentioned.

**Staff -**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Times Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal-state information exchange</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal information exchange</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative requests</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information exchange between THEC and UT Trustees or Board of Regents (governing boards)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone requests</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from meetings</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commissioners -**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Times Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislative-executive branch contact</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication from individual institutions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from THEC staff</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official reports from institutions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEC executive director</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications from UT/Board of Regents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By and through news media</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between executive director and individual institutions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Given the opportunity to identify the various channels of communication, both staff and members of the commission seemed similarly content with adequacy of the feedback channels. Asked what additional feedback channels there might be, their responses were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Commissioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None needed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More needed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among respondents who would consider the fruitfulness of some additional channels of communication, those which surfaced are:

**Staff** -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Channels</th>
<th>Times Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More public meetings</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student contact</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus visits</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing faculty committees</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commissioners** -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Channels</th>
<th>Times Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trade and industry groups</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open telephone lines</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better reporting system from individual institutions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even among the dissenting minority of both groups here, there seems to be a sparsity of thoughtful examination of the communication process and its additional benefits. Only if all of these single responses were merged into a single communication strategy would they present a strong outlook.

The "Crisis in Public Confidence"

The examination of perceptions of public awareness focused on the
widely used slogan of the past two decades, the "crisis in public confidence," in all of American education, used by university presidents, politicians, public relations administrators and many others. The research instrument takes the respondent through seven levels or stages or areas of the search for perception:

* Has there been such a national "crisis" in the past?
* Why? What are at its roots?
* Is it still a problem?
* Perceptions of ways to eliminate or reduce the crisis, focusing particularly on the way a former national figure in American education once perceived it.
* Is the solution a responsibility of higher education as well as others?
* Has THEC played a past role in the solution?
* Should it have a future role? What might those roles be?

Here is a look at the levels of perception and depth of feeling through the first five of those questions (10-14).

Has there been a "crisis in public confidence" in the past?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Commissioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree somewhat</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree somewhat</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree strongly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the opportunity to discuss the question and its implications, the respondents in both groups expressed their feelings and in some cases revealed the origins or the nature of those feelings. Such
expressions add both breadth and depth of understanding to their apparent awareness. They are fragments of the respondents' personal history, education, professional perspective, geographical and political identity and many other facets of the individual staff members or commissioners. The combined forces of these elements, along with others not revealed, are what the individual brings into the THEC office each day or into the conference room or auditorium at each meeting of the Commission. This is an important part of the substance of decision making.

Attitudes—or expressions of attitudes—include these:

Staff -

* Public support for all education has failed to return to a pre-World War II level because the public still perceives a diminution of value in "the end product in basic skills such as writing," said one staff member.

* Another said: "I don't believe everybody has lost confidence in education. But collectively people find difficulty in finding jobs and they feel that the college degree has not given them the advantage" (they thought they would have).

* Another added: "I agree that the public's confidence in education has been shaken and the reason for it is that the public seems to relate a degree with getting a job. There is a mistaken expectation of higher education, but higher education is not just that. It is there to improve the quality of the individual's life. Still, I do feel that higher education . . . has not responded to the consumer, to the product, the way the manufacturer would to his consumer, to his product."
* Another stated that there was a "broad effort to change public opinion about American education by improving access to it (for the handicapped and other groups) and by attracting the "culturally deprived to partake of its offerings." But he said, "In total perspective, education is better than perceived."

* The one staff member who agreed strongly about the presence of a "crisis of confidence" said that the competition between "egalitarian and meritocracy" in education had lowered the academic standards of education. He also said he felt that the public view of athletes receiving degrees without adequate scholastic performance has been harmful to education and its image.

* A former junior high school teacher said the public has been critical of education because it has "asked schools to do more than just teach reading and writing without providing funding for doing that."

* "The crisis is over the quality of instruction and the quantity of instruction, not the cost," said another staff member. "The people do not really believe the quality is as high as it should be," he added.

* There is evidence, another said, that uncontrolled access to education--"open rolls"--has led to a "decline of public confidence in education generally, but confidence in higher education is relatively higher."

Commissioners -

* Education has come to be viewed by the general public as "the solution to all problems," said a member of the commission. "And when it has not been, the public has lost confidence in it."
Another commissioner represented another end of the spectrum, expressing ignorance of the issues and controversies that have been swirling throughout the professional and public domains since the 1960's. "I'm not aware of it (the 'crisis in public confidence'). I haven't heard it in the news media, but then I don't believe everything I hear."

Other commissioners made these comments:

* "The students just can't read or write. The product of the schools is not as good as it should be."

* In the schools there has been "a neglect of moral and ethical values and a lack of reinforcing ethical and moral values which would add to the total training of the individual. It has helped bring on that lack of confidence."

* Relaxed academic standards have led to easy high school graduation and "destroyed public confidence in education."

* The schools "have failed miserably K through 12 and the public now sees people graduating from college who can't (do simple mathematical calculations) to see what their tax is. And they demonstrate use of poor English."

* "We have gone through 20 years in higher education with emphasis on quantity. There has been a decline in confidence in what people think of their schools. The real crisis is to restore that confidence among people with new affluence and rising expectations." He expressed some hope that "new generations" will restore the confidence.

* "I'm not sure it is a crisis, but it has led to a lot of frustration," another said. He offered this: "I sometimes think
there's too much higher education. If they (young people) get too much education, they won't work in the (manufacturing) plants. There's almost too much higher education."

* The only respondent to disagree (somewhat) with the initial question on public confidence said: "Some people have lost confidence, but the majority have not lost it."

Is the "crisis in public confidence" still with us—including higher education? Staff members were still in solid agreement that it is, with a shift upward in stronger feelings. No significant change appeared among members of the commission. The responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Staff</th>
<th>Commissioners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree somewhat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree somewhat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree strongly</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

Is it suitable for the American education establishment to take steps to overcome any loss of public confidence? The question was placed in the frame of reference of Dr. Sidney Marland's 1973 statement that education "must put its case before the public." The responses:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Commissioners</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree somewhat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree somewhat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree strongly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
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</table>

Should higher education be a part of the effort to regain public confidence? The responses:
Has THEC played a role in any such effort in the past to gain public confidence in education? The responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Commissioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Examples of expressions of attitudes include:

**Staff** -

* Yes, with responder indicating a significant role played by media coverage of meetings during which the Commission debates issues and makes decisions regarding fiscal and academic matters.

* Studies (results of data gathering published by THEC) have helped inform the public.

* "We have played a role but we haven't accomplished what we should have; the further we run the further behind we get. The information we have generated has had some effect. THEC's very existence has instilled some public confidence."

* "Our effort to translate the state's needs into money" as an act of fiscal responsibility and management has generated its own informational value. But there is also "a need to sell and explain."
* "Yes, in two ways. First we have sponsored specific programs; discussed (in public forum) issues that deal with public higher education that have had an impact inside and outside the state; surveyed graduates to see if they had jobs and were satisfied (with their education); we have circulated information widely and held public hearings. Secondly, we have tried to respond to requests for information (through miscellaneous requests and such means as an open WATS line)."

Commissioners -

* Yes, it has played a definite role. It has acted as a reconciling element, reconciling divergent views rather than giving the public a single viewpoint (from each institution).

* Yes, in (providing) quality of education and maintaining access (for young people of the state) to education.

* "Yes, not as another special interest group, each screaming for more money. That doesn't make any sense. But by presenting itself as a group, a responsible organization making difficult decisions."

* "I think it has (played a positive role) by raising the confidence of the smaller institutions which are now receiving more equitable funding."

* "By eliminating the ideas that there was favoritism (among the separate institutions) and insisting on quality of education. In recommending fair distribution of funds, we have put heavy weight on quality of instruction."

* "Yes, but (our effort) has not been as great as it should be or could have been. We have tried to but we have been slapped down sharp
(pointing to two major controversies in recent years). But THEC has
done well. Dollar for dollar, our money has been well spent." The
respondent is a veteran attorney experienced in governmental financial
matters.

* By providing a statewide overview and governance. THEC has
"provided assurance to . . . legislative bodies. This has generated
comfort and assurance to them."

Two negative comments are worth noting. Although members of the
commission are appointed, they do somewhat "represent" a kind of consti-
tuency other than the office of the governor, who makes the appointment.
Commissioners' home bases are scattered throughout the state. Each of
the negative responses were from commissioners from the eastern "grand
division" of Tennessee.(2) Major institutions in that region are The
University of Tennessee's Knoxville campus and East Tennessee State
University along with a number of community colleges and technical
institutes. ETSU and the two-year institutions are governed by the
statewide Board of Regents. ETSU is the site of the state's second
medical school, a hotly controversial issue which involved THEC.

* "We are not reaching the public at large to any large degree.
Not one person in 500 knows anything about THEC," said one commissioner.

* "No. All the public sees of THEC has been negative and
controversial," said the other dissenting respondent. He cited specifi-
cally a long and bitter fight that ended with Tennessee State
University, a predominantly black institution, taking over the Nashville
campus of the University of Tennessee, the state's most powerful insti-
tution of higher education. The dispute began with the issue of
inequitable funding.
In summary, those responses indicate approval of a continuation of past public relations roles, no wish to explore beyond them. For any public relations activities, both groups reinforced responses to earlier questions, indicating that:

* The legislative and executive branches and the two governing boards should be the principal target publics of any major communication effort, with or without a professional communication staff to plan and administer this activity. If any other potential target audiences were chosen for a passing mention, they were not sufficiently strong to indicate a ground swell of feeling toward them.

* Increased funding for public relations programming received a positive vote (6-3) from both staff and commissioners—but only if some sharp increase in funding from state appropriations for higher education and THEC were forthcoming, an unlikely event in the foreseeable future.

* Finally, there was a nearly unanimous consensus that THEC staff, particularly the executive director, would have to bear the primary burden of communicating THEC's perceptions to the general public about higher education's needs and the issues facing it in Tennessee.

"What future role might there be for THEC in the improving or regaining public confidence in higher education in Tennessee?" the responders were asked. The responses were:

**Staff**

* "The principal role THEC is suited for is to acquire and disseminate information about higher education which could influence public attitudes."
* "Continue as before and investigate other methods according to the different needs."

* "Continue what we're doing and find new avenues to achieve this."

* "...do more of the same but more effectively with media leadership (indicating corporate leaders of news media), capitalizing on media relations."

* "On a continuing basis, monitor the output of higher education output (students) and report to the public what has happened to the thousands of students in regards to employment, location and satisfaction with their education experiences."

* "THEC should attempt to explain to the general public what the role of higher education is in Tennessee and American society--and what its role is not." (As an example, the role of libraries could be more adequately explained, the responder said.) "Institutions should know what the public's expectations are."

* THEC should play "a supportive role for the systems themselves (Board of Regents and University of Tennessee systems) rather than being in the forefront. Because each system is different, it would be better for the systems to explain themselves."

* THEC should have some role in improving public attitudes, said one responder, but he was not sure what that role should be.

* "...continue to...provide as much information as possible, to widen (THEC's) dissemination capabilities." The responder was asked by what means. The response was "...explaining THEC and the educational resources available to the public." The only specific channel mentioned was publications.
Commissioners -

* No future role is required, one responder said, but he also pointed to the need to "inspire, to motivate institutional quality, to emphasize the maintenance of quality programs. This would enhance the image of higher education."

* "I can't think of any."

* "I'm not sure."

* "As people in the state now understand THEC—and most do not—I don't think it's possible (to change any role of THEC). I don't see one (a new role in improving public understanding)—not as THEC is presently set up—without expansion."

* "THEC is a creature of the General Assembly. I'm satisfied that we are doing well what the Legislature has asked us to do."

* "I'd like to see (the role) extended, but it's difficult to proceed when there is such a premium on funding."

* "We have been unable to get across the message of the importance of the public role in decision making about what Tennessee (higher education) receives." The responder said that the public should speak out with the message that "we are not going to spend any less than the other states in the region. THEC should be doing a better job of selling the legislature and the governor's office on this."

Numerically, the composite picture of all 18 responders is clear. Twelve indicated no change in THEC's role in improving public attitudes was likely. A slim minority said there were additional roles which could be played. Two responders (one staff and one commissioner) were unsure and the responses of two commissioners were not responsible enough to make them suitable for this study.
However, it seems worth a passing note to examine more closely the responses themselves to see suggestions that would shift the numerical weight, not to the other side of the ledger but to emphasize contraindications; a willingness to think otherwise, an open door. Only six responders, five of them commissioners, indicated no outright change in the Commission's role should be made. Among six others the responders said one thing but added concrete ideas for items on the "agenda" for tomorrow. Adding those thoughts to the two outright suggestions for change in the THEC role, the balance between the two alternatives--change and no change--reveals a different picture.

This examination is highly speculative, of course, and is not offered as resulting from thoughtful consideration of possibilities.

Perspectives on Public Relations

The respondents were asked if, in their view, the profession of public relations was useful in American society. The question may appear tainted in that it does not define "public relations." Such a definition, of course, is difficult since there are many definitions of public relations. The investigator only sought perceptions of the multi-faceted abstraction most commonly identified as "public relations." The responses were:

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<tr>
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<th>Staff</th>
<th>Commissioners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
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Individual responses included these:

Staff -

* "Those kinds of communications are very important. That
function, in which it is given a formal role in an organization, complete with a clientele, is too frequently overlooked."

* "It's like having a mediator. It can inform when it is necessary to pull people together."

* "The main reason is because it communicates the goals and objectives of the agency." (The responder assumed the question was focused on THEC.)

* "It is vital because it is essential to relate to the public, to communicate with the public."

* "Public relations serves as a vehicle to keep interested citizens informed."

* "It is a necessity for accurate information on which the public can base its judgements."

* "PR tries to put the best foot forward to emphasize the quality of the organization or benefits of the organization, quality that people on the outside might not understand."

* "It improves public attitudes. It probably can help an organization function more effectively or promote understanding."

* "It's got to let the public know what you're doing and project an image."

**Commissioners**

* "It disseminates information to the public. It has no role otherwise."

* "It has a useful function within limits. Many times it goes too far."
It makes people aware of what's being done." The responder explained that THEC's work involved "working with other boards," indicating the two major state governing boards in higher education, the State Board of Education and other such groups. "That's public relations."

The objectives of public relations are good. It is part of the educational process. It is a vehicle (of communication) and a tool. It is a deception to say that it's harmful. We must put our best foot forward. You can't sell without advertising. You should let people know what you've got."

"It is useful within limitations. (In the case of THEC) it would be bad if we had massive campaigning, with vast sums of money being spent for public relations as in a political campaign. But listening and being interested serves a very useful purpose. It's like being a good neighbor."

"Without public relations, the citizen will not be adequately informed."

"Ideally, it is unnecessary, but it is (necessary) because understanding by others may be ineffective if we don't have it (public relations)."

"Public relations, whether we like it or not, has an important function. An informed public responds better than one not informed. The key is furnishing the public with accurate information."

"Society today is so complex that it is hard to understand. Public relations is a very significant factor in helping evaluations be made. Everything (said) is from a point of view; the public would not be able to make a decision (without it)."
Whether public relations is perceived positively or negatively, respondents were reminded that it is a fact of life in American education and that public relations has been given a firmly established role in the search for public confidence, including higher education chief executives.

The question then was: "Is public relations a suitable role and function for higher education." The responses:

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Commissioners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approve strongly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve somewhat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove somewhat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove strongly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What about the same for THEC or other such higher education coordinating agencies:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Commissioners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
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<td>No</td>
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Has THEC played a public relations role in the past?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

Those who felt that THEC had played a public relations role (nine staff, four commissioners) were asked: What has been the focus of that public relations role (more than one selection allowed per respondent)?
Among the three staff members who recommended some THEC course of action or level of activity other than continuation of past public relations, two indicated additional use of publications and one recommended a "newsletter" of unspecified type.

In the past, what have been the primary publics of the public relations activities, staff and commissioners were asked. Their responses were (first choices only):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Commissioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislative &amp; executive branches of state government</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions of higher education in Tennessee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The general public</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UT Board of Trustees and Board of Regents governing boards</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unanswered</td>
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</table>
Would any of the respondents recommend the addition of other target publics which might be helpful in THEC's future communication efforts?

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<th>Commissioners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

Among the five respondents—-the four members of the staff and the one commissioner—who recommended some publics which might improve THEC's communication posture, the publics identified were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publics</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Commissioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UT Trustees &amp; Board of Regents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (The lone commissioner recommending some additional publics in the one response listed all of these possible publics: students, the general public and local government.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other coordinating agencies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other higher education systems</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

Additional PR Funding

Would individuals in the two groups approve increased funding for THEC public relations activities in the future? If the proof is in the funding, a first glance at the responses is misleading. A majority of each group—six members of the staff and five members of the Commission—stated they would approve greater budgetary support. Here are the responses:
**Staff -**

* No. "Too many other priorities. It's out of balance as it is."
* No. "There's nothing left for them to do."
* No. "Too many other higher priorities."
* Yes. "It's important to get information out, because of lack of (public) confidence, which can be changed by adequate funding."
* Yes. "One of our mandates is to provide public information."
* Yes. "Because (public relations) has a central role to play."
* Yes. Because the decline in public confidence "requires more attention toward increased and better communication with the publics involved."
* Yes. "Because we are in a great position, since we are not an advocate for any one campus. We could then be a higher education advocate without being accused of feathering our own nest."
* Yes. "I think we need to upgrade the position and the quality of the public relations area with better personnel."

**Commissioners -**

* No. "It is not as preferred as other functions."
* No. "PR has no dollar value on it, so it gets put on the back burner."
* No. "If shown the necessity and value of it, the purpose of it, things might be different. Other things take priority. But given a brighter economy, I might be convinced to say 'yes'."
* "No, unless there is a general fund increase."
"Yes, but it has a low priority. So many other things need additional funds."
"Yes, if what is proposed is justified."
Yes. "We might get more done...any way possible."
Yes. (Respondent gave no explanation.)
"Yes, I'd approve any funding."

A shortage of funds, real or otherwise, is often a reasonable explanation for the inability or unwillingness to include some activity in an organization's operating budget. However, when a reasonable rationale for its inclusion is presented elsewhere with some clarity and force, an inconsistency remains difficult to resolve. In this case, the inconsistency appears between responses to questions 20-23 and earlier comments supporting the notion of public relations for its impact on public awareness, even as a mediator between units of society. Such comments do not, of course, spell out a commitment to some massive public relations communication role. However, they do indicate that the responders know the benefits of public relations and yet exclude THEC, its public mission and its present and potential publics from those benefits. Such responses could indicate that THEC leadership supports the philosophical concept of public relations yet does not fully understand the important notion of "publics" and the crucial need to establish means to reach them.

Public Relations: Whose Job Is It?

One frequent concept among public relations professionals is that the main public relations professional at an institution or corporation
is the president (chancellor, chairman, chief executive officer, etc.),
acknowledging that a large portion of the job of communication to
publics is a major responsibility of the institutional leader, although
responsibility for the outcome is not always placed on him or accepted
by him. Both THEC's commissioners and staff were strongly aware of this
notion when asked: "Do other THEC staff play a public relations role?"
Nine members of the staff and eight of the commissioners acknowledged
this and identified several top staff members who play the role at least
on some occasions and sometimes just by virtue of their position. The
executive director was the most frequently mentioned. Six of the staff
and eight of the commissioners said they saw no need for the executive
director to play any expanded role in public relations. One com-
missioner made no response.

Summary

Both groups of responders in the case study generally expressed
contentment with the regulatory role of THEC, its few governmental
publics and the basic channels of communication now used to reach them.
They acknowledge a general citizenry disenchanted with education, with
the broad societal role of public relations, but no strong sentiment
toward public relations as a means to offset the public discontent was
indicated. Public relations as a specific professional category of com-
munication has achieved some small established presence in the statewide
higher education agencies, demonstrated by the presence of 14 full-time
and three part-time health employees among the 28 responding agencies
reporting in the national profile.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The central question of this research is: What is the appropriate public relations role of the unique governmental-organization situation presented by statewide higher education coordinating agencies? This investigation seeks to discern that role through the perceptions of those who are empowered to dictate and carry out that role, in this instance the administrative staff and governmentally appointed policy makers of one such agency. The investigation then was a detailed case study of that agency, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

The findings of this research can be summarized in the responders perceptions in five major areas: primary role of the agency, principal constituencies, principal channels of communication to and from those constituencies, the nature of acknowledgement of a "crisis of confidence" of the public regarding higher education and the suitability of public relations as a means by which THEC might help overcome that public perception.

Broadly, THEC's administrative leadership and its policy makers agreed that:

* Regulation of higher education and assurance of fiscal equity are the stuff of the agency's primary role.

* The legislature of Tennessee and the leadership of higher education institutions are the primary constituent publics of THEC.
* Appropriate channels of communication for THEC are statistical studies with current information on fiscal and programmatic matters, open public meetings and personal-correspondence communication with governmental and institutional leadership and similar channels are adequate to meet THEC's communication responsibilities. Overall, news media was acknowledged as an important means available for communication.

* A "crisis in public confidence" in all of American (including Tennessee) education was a continuing condition and that some steps ought to be taken to overcome that decline in support.

* The arts and sciences of public relations received a positive response from the two groups as a means to overcome the perceived "crisis in public confidence" but such an effort received only a weak vote of approval for THEC.

After careful examination of the data of this study, five conclusions may be drawn. All are interrelated. Each reflects consideration of the others and throws light on the whole.

1. THE TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION'S DECLARED PRIMARY ROLE OF COORDINATION OR REGULATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION HAS SERIOUS LIMITATIONS IN ANY EFFORT TO REGAIN PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION BECAUSE THAT ROLE, WHILE IT ATTACKS ONE OF THE FACTORS UNDERLYING DIMINISHED PUBLIC SUPPORT, IS INADEQUATE TO COMMUNICATE THE COMMISSION'S OWN GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS AND THE SOCIETAL VALUE OF ITS ASSIGNED TASK.

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission is a child of the state's General Assembly, created as a regulatory body, following the dominant
characteristics of its lineage. Considering its origins and its 16-year
history, there are no discernible signs that it will stray far from the
basic course it has followed over those years. THEC was created as an
arm of government to settle a political dispute, to correct fiscal ineq-
uity and to bring frugal planning and thoughtful governance—if not
harmony—to the administration and management of higher learning in
Tennessee, primarily state-assisted higher education.

It is recommended that THEC develop a more comprehensive definition
of its role in the public life of Tennessee and the people of the state.
Such a definition should take into account a more comprehensive under-
standing of a broader range of publics to be served, an understanding
somewhat prohibited by the political origins of the organization and the
agency's responsibilities to communicate with them.

THEC's primary course of action, the role it was assigned and the
role it accepts and pursues, is coordination of higher learning (mostly
state-assisted institutions), the regulation and articulation of all
programs and resources with the almost exclusive aim of fiscal and aca-
demic efficiency. Such a role does not eliminate or make less important
the organization's many communication responsibilities and opportunities.
It merely neglects them or disperses them, leaving them undone or less
effective, leaving them without suitable goals and performed without
plan or management.

It is recommended that THEC more clearly define its communication
role. The Commission has numerous identified communication respon-
sibilities and opportunities which might commonly fall under the aegis
of public relations as an administrative-management function as is the
case with many corporate and institutional organizations. In THEC those
which are identified as "public information" activities are assigned to
an "educational specialist" and are only a small part of that position's
responsibilities. Further, that position is assigned to the staff of an
associate executive director for state and federal affairs. Other
activities such as publications, audio visual programs, media relations,
institutional communications, and coordination of public speaking are
either administered by other units or individuals, conducted in minimal
form or not explicitly included in the organization's operational plan.

Considering the generally acknowledged role played by public rela-
tions practitioners throughout the American higher education community
in turning the tide of public opinion, it seems shortsighted and inef-
fective to establish and maintain a state agency without an organized
capability to communicate at least some of the results of the agency
itself and the institutions it has been assigned to coordinate to a wide
variety of large and small publics the agency was established to serve.

While THEC follows a course almost exclusively regulation and
fiscal equity, a view of what might be—or might have been—comes from
Glenny. The coordinating boards, he said, could serve as spokesman for
informing both public and legislators of the function of higher
education. His view was that laws establishing coordinating boards
should not be the outer limit of performance and objective but the
beginning point for a wide range of functions to meet the needs at hand,
including planning and promoting higher education as a principal goal.
Spending the agency's $1.2 million budget as it has in the years since
1967 may satisfy the fiscally conscious legislature and perhaps many
others. But there is enough "evidence"—suggestions for a modified THEC model if not a totally different new corporate course—to indicate that the status quo will assure only a lost opportunity to play a communication role well within the law and the agency's capability. Such a role would be more attuned to the conditions of an increasingly fragmented and information-hungry society. Such a role is not without a good foundation among educational leaders who helped persuade the profession, government and the public that coordination of higher education was a worthy goal and suitable to the needs of a changing world.

Millet's call to promote a "sense of shared purpose" between society and higher education was made in a general sense, but it is unlikely that he put aside that strong feeling when he became the first chief executive of the Ohio Board of Regents, the higher education coordinating agency for that state. Glenny (a former chief executive of the coordinating board of Illinois) saw the need for such a communication and leadership role for those who coordinate. Others—Smart, Berdahl, Rabin, Callan, Jonsen and Mautz—each added a stroke to the portrait of what coordinating bodies might be. They helped piece together a model of THEC as a generator of information and understanding for the public weal as well as a quality control mechanism, sharing the role as keeper of a societal resource as well as acting as an arm of government.

After 16 years in existence, THEC's original role—regulation and coordination—has not diminished in importance. But it should be seen in the light of other companion roles which can make that primary role more effective. THEC must continue to coordinate public higher education, maintain fiscal equity among all institutions and maintain an
effective master plan for higher learning, but the crucial role of communication with the people and groups it was created to serve cannot be carried out with only the directions to "conduct a program of public information."

THEC's major roles might include:

* Communication, clearly stated and defined in a kind of master plan or strategy, developed for that purpose to reach all potentially useful publics.

* A plan to promote higher education as a major societal resource worth regulating and coordinating.

* A statement of THEC's role as a consumer advocate in the public interest, primarily focused on students (the only product of the machinery of higher education) but also embracing parents of higher education students, other parents, and members of the business/industry community in Tennessee. It would seem that any organization created to act as fiscal watchdog should automatically assume some role of protector of those who receive the direct benefit of the fiscal resources thus conserved.

This new role is described by Callan and Jonsen--that of consumer protection or consumer advocacy. Since THEC and all the other coordinating agencies emphasize the role of fiscal watchdog, energies in that direction could easily be adapted to include these kindred roles. In fact, playing the role of consumer advocate gives the THEC mission a more definitive character than fiscal watchdog. The latter is very often passive and reactive. Consumer protection encompasses a broader range of activity and establishes a more active, more positive character.
Such a role would give the organization a tenor much closer in philosophy to the basic purposes of THEC's governmental parents—the General Assembly and the office of the Governor. There is no more practical concept of grassroots government than being responsive to the constituency of the elected official. Practicing the various roles of coordination and maintaining fiscal equity generally can be done in THEC's headquarters offices. Demonstrating consumer advocacy requires administrative work, but is also requires a greater outreach to specific groups of consumers. Any legislator of skill and political insight will recognize the value to individually elected officials and representative government in general of practicing consumer advocacy and taking its results to the people they were elected to represent.

More than anything, this concept would focus the attention of the legislature and the Governor's office on the role behind the role. If the role is fiscal equity and coordination, that role is not for the benefit of government or higher education. Such an administrative effort is surely for the benefit of government and higher education but only as it is a resource to the people of the state.

Acknowledging the role of consumer advocacy does more than establish a new role. It focuses attention of all concerned on, among other things, the only product of higher education: the students, first as they are a very special public as an identifiable group and then, in ever growing numbers, those students upon graduation become citizens at large, the business resources, the elected officials, the taxpayers, the parents of importance to government and THEC itself. But such a new role would also focus attention on other consumers, those who do not
attend college classes but still benefit from the principal product—the student, higher education itself.

2. BOTH THEC STAFF AND COMMISSIONERS FOCUSED LITTLE OR NO ATTENTION ON THE LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENT TO CONDUCT A PROGRAM OF PUBLIC INFORMATION ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION IN TENNESSEE.

While a variety of information is routinely prepared, published and distributed or otherwise disseminated, little concern was expressed by the responders in regard to the legislature's original mandate or how it might be satisfied, or the rationale, substance, mechanics, goals, impact or assessment of such a program of communication, i.e., the role such a communication program might play in the role of THEC's future.

It is unfortunate that the establishing legislation did not contain greater detail about such a program of public information, the fifth of seven specified duties of the Commission. While the other six duties—to develop a master plan, to study academic and programmatic needs, to develop policies of fiscal equity, etc.—required at least eight lines of explanation, only two were required to legislate a program of public information. It is not clear from those two lines if the information was to be only of a public nature and therefore merely available to the people of the state or if it was the intent of the legislature to make certain that the people of Tennessee received abundant, accurate, timely, and in-depth information on which to base judgements and on which to base decisions about the success of the state-assisted programs of higher education.

In 1967, the provision was made a specific part of the law, but there seems to be an underlying assumption that the statement of duty
defines the duty and clarifies its need, the extent and urgency of the need and how it is to be satisfied. On the other hand, the absence of detailed guidelines provides an opportunity for the Commission and its staff to assemble data concerning the citizenry's need for information and design a plan for providing it. The initiative is left in administrative hands.

While regulation is clearly an important function of such a body as THEC, established with a specific seven-point mandate, the degree to which six regulatory goals have overshadowed the other one—"to conduct a program of public information"—has been a focus of this study. In another sense, the focus of the study has been the degree to which the information portion of the mandate has been limited to the status of by-product. That specific portion of the original mandate is open to interpretation as to intent; therefore, the study has been an examination of the perceptions in regards to a specific communications strategy as seen by those charged with implementing all of the legislature's original seven goals.

It is recommended that

(a) THEC develop and conduct a specific, more broadly defined program of public information, with full detail as to its underlying philosophy and responsibilities, its content, improvements and the means by which it is to be carried out and nurtured.

(b) The overall administration of such a program be assigned to a public relations professional who can manage not only the dissemination of one-way information but a program of two-way communication designed to explain the societal mission and importance of the higher education enterprise it was established to regulate.
3. RESPONDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CONSTITUENCIES OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE TO THEC'S LONG-RANGE MISSION ARE SHORTSIGHTED. THOSE IDENTIFIED EXCLUDE MANY GROUPS ESSENTIAL TO ANY SUCCESSFUL COORDINATION (TO BRING TOGETHER, TO MAKE WORK AS ONE) EFFORT. WHILE THE PUBLICS SO IDENTIFIED AS PRIMARY ARE ESSENTIAL, THEY LEAVE THE ORGANIZATION COMMUNICATING ON A FEW NARROW FREQUENCIES.

There is a clear-cut responsibility of THEC to the publics identified by both staff and members of the Commission, generally the legislature and the governing boards of other institutions in the state. There is a clear relationship between THEC and these groups. There are relatively easy means of access to those two groups by THEC, especially the legislature because of its physical proximity in the state capitol. But what of those publics generally untouched by THEC, at least not by wish or plan?

It is recommended that THEC's policy makers and staff develop a more comprehensive definition of its constituencies as an exercise in:

(a) acknowledging new "publics" which might be more adequately served;

(b) enhancing service to those important primary publics which are essential to the declared mission of THEC; such an effort would lead to deeper understanding of those publics ultimately served by THEC and the legislative body which created the organization; and,

(c) preventing isolation of THEC from those publics ultimately served by both THEC and its primary constituencies.

The faculties of each state-assisted campus in the state should not be excluded as a constituency or even considered a minor one. One major
issue that confronted formation of statewide coordinating agencies
across the nation in the past two decades was the autonomy of the indi-
vidual institution, especially academic autonomy. Where else but in the
faculties of the institutions is there a stronger fortress for indepen-
dence of the academic model of higher learning than in the faculty
senates? Where else is there greater resistance to the encroachments of
central administrative authority than in those senates and in the minds
of hundreds of individuals in the professional ranks. If there ever was
a public to be cultivated seriously through many channels of communic-
tation—cultivated toward the end of successful statewide effort at coor-
dination of the higher education enterprise—the teachers, professors,
research investigators, academic leaders of the state make up such a
major constituency. Even among the minority of the two groups in this
study which acknowledged other publics to be served by THEC, faculty
represented only a minor group among the publics so identified by that
minority.

Students are not merely another important public whose good will
and understanding should be cultivated. As described earlier, they make
up the important first line of consumers of higher education, the con-
sumer of the "product" or service provided by the institutions but coor-
dinated by THEC for more economic and effective service. In addition,
these are the future leaders of the state and nation who will again,
after graduation, make judgements about the success of THEC's efforts
and by the legislature which created the organization. If students are
not a definitive public of THEC, a quasi-political body geographically
and otherwise isolated from those it serves, then they are an important
public of the legislature which created THEC.
By inference, the parents of those same students are an important public. This group is not as clearly defined as students and faculty, but they are a public with special requirements for information and understanding. In addition, there are the thousands of individuals in the state who never attend higher education classes, yet provide tax revenue for them and reap benefit from higher education.

The "general public" was the most frequently acknowledged constituency among all the responders in this study, but naming it seemed to have been more an identification of a perceived obligation rather than a planned constituency, selected under some formal, approved plan to reach it. In fact, the expectation seemed clear that the mass news media would provide a perpetual channel of communication—with acceptable focus and content—to the residents of Tennessee, with little other effort by THEC.

Attention given THEC by the news media is constant but generally focused on controversy or major decisions made in fiscal or academic matters. Without addition of a professional communication staff to assist the media in shifting—or broadening—the media focus, it will likely remain the same.

Lance pointed out the dangers of isolation from contact with many large and small constituencies, an isolation that has become a way of life with major public bodies like state departments of education, THEC and others. The dangers are worth noting in terms of the study by Maniha and Ferron. While THEC does not fit the precise model of a "reluctant organization," it fits to the extent that it was legally required to join the higher education community, springing full blown
from the head of the state legislature. One can only speculate on the outcome if THEC followed the pattern of Maniha-Parrow's youth commission. The commission found it necessary to design and implement a mission quite different from its original role assigned by city government.

4. THE TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION HAS NO STRATEGY FOR MANAGEMENT OF ITS COMMUNICATION RESOURCES, NO MASTER PLAN FOR COMMUNICATION COMPARABLE TO OR STATED WITHIN THE OVERALL MASTER PLAN FOR ALL OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

THEC's program of communication, required by law, is restrained or undeveloped because it has no strategy. Therefore, it too remains uncoordinated. This leaves the statewide higher education coordinating agency without a strategy to achieve specific goals in its efforts to conduct a program of public information about higher education in Tennessee. Without a communication strategy, the organization's role is not fully perceived, all of its appropriate publics only dimly seen and the dangers of isolation very real.

It is recommended that a comprehensive strategy for the management of all THEC's communication requirements and responsibilities be developed and carried out. The strategy should achieve these ends:

(a) It should provide a more detailed plan to meet the original legislative charge to "conduct a program of public information about higher education in Tennessee."

(b) It should take into consideration, at least in its philosophical foundation, not only the history of THEC but the origins of the total higher education coordinating movement. It should examine the
potential for the new coordinating bodies as expressed by many of its leaders in the beginning of the national coordinating effort to achieve greater effectiveness through greater public accountability.

(c) The strategy should be not only a management instrument to help THEC more effectively meet current demands upon it, but should also state some vision of what THEC might become through an evolving mission to meet the demands of the future.

(d) It should bring together all of the agency's many communication activities and responsibilities under the administration of one department. The department should be formed with an exclusively communication mission under the direction of trained and experienced professionals in the field of higher education public relations.

(e) It should re-examine current tools, avenues and vehicles of communication now used by THEC with the aim of improving the effectiveness of all three—and the effectiveness of the total communication mission; special attention should be given to development of “feedback” communication—perceptions provided from present publics as well as the many diverse publics which might be served in the future.

(f) Some means must be devised and set in motion to measure the effectiveness of THEC's communications program, some means to monitor communications activities and to evaluate their results.

Today, we live in a worldwide information society. All organized units of that society by their very nature have a communication role, a role that cannot be played effectively without fully declared and accepted standards, plans and objectives. THEC's communication activities are carried out partly because of the innate human and
organizational impulse to communicate and partly because the legislature has required it to conduct "a program of public information," but that requirement has remained poorly defined and without guidelines as to content, purpose or expectations.

Communication as a function of THEC covers many activities common to individuals and organizations elsewhere in society--person-to-person information exchange, group meetings, written correspondence and telephone calls, printed publications and other such material for mass or special distribution, including some information occasionally released to the mass news media. Some of this employs electronic devices and channels. But communication of a more formal nature, with a planned, comprehensive strategy, has played little or no role in THEC's corporate life, certainly not by comparison with educational planning, policy making, managing fiscal resources, conducting institutional research, reviewing, analyzing, making decisions and carrying out similar duties of such a body operating in a quasi-political atmosphere.

Communication, then, has been more like buttermilk than milk or butter, a by-product only co-incidental to the principal expected outcome. However, unlike the elixir of churned milk, communication, lifted from its more common societal environment, has yet to be seen as a useful and marketable product with an inherent value of its own, a value perhaps far greater than suspected. To carry the analogy further, refinements of the current by-product have never been attempted much less taken to the marketplace of a changing society with changing needs.

The day of communication as a primary activity, the first order of business, may not have arrived for THEC, just as the day of buttermilk
had not been recognized in earlier pastoral times of making "the more expensive spread" from the milk of bovines. Buttermilk's value was later recognized not merely by those pioneering few who liked the taste but also by the frugal spirit of others who eschewed the waste of any part of Nature's harvest, those who recognized the growing value of a product once thought to be co- incidental.

Development of a communication strategy, indeed a master plan for communication to become a part of the statewide master plan for higher learning, would fill the void left by the original legislation. It might include:

* An expression of belief in the two most obvious, species specific acts of humanity--communication and education.
* A full definition of that content, purpose and expectations of the strategy.
* A clear prescription of the numbers and types of professional personnel required to achieve the goals of the strategy--and the necessary fiscal support.
* A full provision of means to gather and encourage a wide range of feedback information from all constituencies.

The absence of a strategy for the use of communication translates into a failure to understand the energy of information--especially when "information" is seen as more than basic data regarding programs, numbers of students, dollars spent, etc. If the concept of strategy were more imaginative (even within the limits of the establishing law), the strategic view of communication might suggest not just additional publics, but a more effective means of reaching present and future
publics; not just more tools and channels, but a more effective use of them, wider horizons and greater energy to reach them. A strategy would outline THEC's expectations of its communication effort.

What seems missing at present is any THEC concept to relate communication--printed data and everything else--first to the mission of coordination and fiscal equity but foremost to the societal purposes at the heart of what is to be regulated and coordinated. The overriding question is: "What are the expectations of the time, effort and money--the total energy--in administering an information program required by law.

Finally, the absence of a communication strategy seems restrictive because of two positive concepts arising from this study. With few exceptions, both groups (1) acknowledged a continuing lack of public support for all of education, including higher education, and (2) approved the philosophy and concept of public relations as a specific, organized effort to communicate and bring about increased public awareness and support.

In its role as fiscal watchdog, THEC must guard all the resources left to its management, including communication. But serious study should be made of what administrative changes designed to improve such communication responsibilities--at what additional cost, for what potential result--are needed to meet the needs of the fifth requirement of the 1967 establishing act and meet the broader communication needs of a changing society. The end result might be a more effective management of the considerable communication activities placed in THEC's hands, regardless of fiscal or other constraints.
If then changes were deemed appropriate to the administration of the organization's communication activities, some study could be made as to how they might be better managed. The study could include an examination of the role public relations professionals might play in the activities so identified in the revised strategy.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The following thoughts might provide a foundation for further research.

1. This investigation focused on the two groups most directly involved in THEC's governance and administration and, therefore, most able to influence any effort to improve its communication posture. But the perceptions of other publics important to THEC would be useful if additional insight is to be gained. Similar or related research aimed at the same broad target should be conducted among members of the legislature, the news media (particularly the capitol hill press corps), the administrators and governing bodies of the two higher education systems in the state, students, faculty and others.

2. In spite of the absence of a THEC communication strategy, large sums of money are spent on publications, telephone communication, mail, travel and other activities which are a part of THEC's communications to and from its publics. Further research should be conducted to learn:
   * How much time and money is spent on all communication?
   * How much is spent specifically on publications?
   * Who are the individuals and groups receiving and using publications?
   * How much effort is allocated each year to assisting news media?
* To what use is that information put to further the goals of coordination and regulation of public resources?

3. Finally, if coordination of public resources is an important effort to achieve accountability in the eyes of the citizens and others coordination was created to serve, a good beginning point might be a statewide survey of public attitudes to help shape guidelines and practices of the future.

With these as background or preliminary research, the following recommendations are made for future research:

1. Initially, another perspective of the findings of this Tennessee study might be sought on the national level, with certain modifications or extensions of it. The research could utilize an expanded version of the national profile questionnaire and a modified design of the interview schedule. Both could be used to study a national sample of both appointive and administrative leadership in statewide higher education coordinating agencies. Design changes should shift emphasis from the more intimate case study to detailed comparison between levels of age, experience, knowledge of communications, job title, perceptions of agency communication goals and even political philosophy or other values.

2. A national study of four specific types of leaders in each of the 29 statewide higher education coordinating organizations relative to their perceptions of appropriate communication activities and priorities, other perceptions and levels of personal-professional demographics. The four leadership categories to be studied and compared should be the chief public relations professional in the agency, the
chief executive officer, the chairman of the appointive body, and the chairman of the education committees in each house of the bicameral general assembly.

3. Analyses of content of selected communication activities of THEC—or other such coordinating organizations—particularly printed publications, would be of value. Among these might be an analysis of each of THEC's master plans and agency studies to date relative to their implications for a communication program. Major questions are: What are the implications for a coordinated communication program as reflected by each master plan? How do the implications of one year compare with others?

4. A content analysis of news media's views of THEC. One such study would be an analysis of editorial page content as it adjudges THEC's abilities to play a leadership role in Tennessee higher education, the rightness of its fiscal decisions, and the relevancy of THEC programs to the societal needs of Tennessee. The study would be pertinent since most of both groups in the THEC case study stated that news media is a crucial public and in some ways more heavily favored than others because of the news media's influence in matters of public opinion. The analysis could be made by city, by county and by size, type and political persuasion of the newspaper. One central hypothesis might be that positive perceptions of THEC by print media has slowly declined as other major societal issues have begun to share the editorial spotlight, thus opening a door for improved communication between THEC and news media.
5. A status study of public relations activities of selected other coordinating agencies, with a special emphasis on self appraisals of both administrative staff and appointive officials relative to the organization's strengths and weaknesses in the area of communication.

The Growing Imperative: A Final Overview

The light which should guide any further study should be a concern for the human need to communicate, individuals and organizations alike, an act fundamental to the human condition but a growing imperative in our fragmented modern society.

Organizations such as the Tennessee Higher Education Commission often put aside or deny themselves this basic, often crucial need to communicate. It is as if communication—planned, purposeful communication—is only worthwhile if there is "enough money in the budget". Such groups—visibly represented here by THEC--too often give top priority to the skills of regulation and organization, skills honed and polished in developed modern urban societies. Such a priority may be chosen at the sacrifice of that species specific human act of communication. The price of such a choice may produce a heavy societal deficit in the future.

* *
APPENDIX A

PUBLIC RELATIONS IN STATE HIGHER EDUCATION

COORDINATING AGENCIES

A questionnaire for data gathering in the dissertation research of Elbert C. Braddock Jr., candidate for Ph.D. degree from the The Ohio State University.

Date: ________________

General

1. Name of coordinating agency: _________________________________________________

2. How many institutions of higher education in your state are coordinated by your agency? _______________________________________________________________

3. What is their total enrollment as of this date? ________________________________

4. Which of the following institutional types are coordinated by your agency?
   ( ) Public
   ( ) Private
   ( ) Four-year
   ( ) Community and junior colleges
   ( ) Technical institutes (two-year)
   ( ) Other (please designate) _______________________________________________

5. What was the population of your state as of the last U. S. Census Report? ________________________________

6. What is the current (1978-79) budget for all state-assisted higher education in your state? ______________________________________________

7. What is the current (1978-79) total budget for all private higher education in your state? ______________________________________________

8. What is the current (1978-79) budget for your agency? _____________________

________________________________________

130
9. How many employees are currently on the payroll of your agency?

10. In your state, what agency has been given authority for approval of your agency's budget:
   ( ) Your own agency
   ( ) State legislature
   ( ) State Board of Education
   ( ) Other (Please designate): ________________________________

11. In your state, what agency has been given authority for approval of your agency's recommended education program for higher education:
   ( ) Your own agency
   ( ) State Legislature
   ( ) State Board of Education
   ( ) Other (Please designate): ________________________________

12. Does your agency have authority to license new institutions?
   ( ) Yes  ( ) No

13. How many full-time public relations professionals are employed by your agency?

14. What is the title of the chief public relations professional at your agency?

15. What are the titles of the other public relations professionals?
   1. ________________________________
   2. ________________________________
   3. ________________________________

(Use the back of this sheet if more space is needed.)
16. Check the appropriate salary range for the chief public relations professional:

( ) $25,000 or more
( ) $20,000 to $24,999
( ) $15,000 to $19,999
( ) $10,000 to $14,999
( ) Less than $10,000

17. To whom does the chief of public relations report? __________________________
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

This interview schedule has been prepared for interviews with the administrative staff and members of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission as part of the dissertation research by Elbert C. Braddock Jr., candidate for the Ph.D. degree at The Ohio State University.

1. Please state your principal background in your professional or commercial life:

   ( ) Business/Industry
   ( ) Higher Education
   ( ) Academic
   ( ) Central Adm.
   ( ) Education, Other

   ( ) Other professions (law, M.D., D.D.S., etc.)
   ( ) Communication (state type of firm)
   ( ) Other (Please specify)

2. In your view, what is the principal purpose of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission?
3. Please list in rank order the three most important additional roles you think THEC plays today.

If respondent does not list "communication" in any form, ask the next questions, 4a and 4b.

4. a. Do you think communication is a proper role for THEC?

(Communication is defined here as any planned program to reach a variety of constituencies, or publics, with predetermined messages about the problems and needs of higher education in Tennessee. The planned program includes establishment and maintenance of channels for receiving messages from those same publics.)

( ) Yes ( ) No

b. If your answer to question number 4.a. was "yes", where would you place communication in the rank order listed under question number 3?

5. Institutions of higher learning generally say that the publics or constituents they serve and with whom they must communicate include their boards of trustees, students, employees, alumni, donors and many other small and large groups of people. In your past association with or observation of THEC, what are the publics of THEC in the rank order of the importance given them by THEC?
6. Are there any other publics or constituent groups which haven't been but should be target groups for communication by THEC?

( ) No
( ) Yes. (List the principal group(s) in rank order)

7. What are the principal vehicles or types of communications used by THEC in the past to reach those publics?

( ) internal newsletters
( ) news media
( ) personal contact
( ) meetings
( ) letters
( ) pamphlets and brochures
( ) annual reports, etc.
( ) other (please specify)

8. Are there any channels or vehicles of communication being overlooked which might improve communication by THEC with its publics?

( ) No
( ) Yes (List the main channel(s) in rank order)

9. a. Inadequate attention given by THEC to the channels for receiving communication from its publics?

( ) yes  ( ) no
9. b. If your answer is yes, what channels can you identify that are now being used for receiving information.

9. c. What channels, if any, would you add to improve the quality and amount of information from THEC's public? If there are more than one, please list them in order of their importance.

10. Many observers have described and decried a "crisis in public confidence" in American education. Looking back, do you:

   ( ) Agree strongly?
   ( ) Agree somewhat?
   ( ) Disagree somewhat?
   ( ) Disagree strongly?
   ( ) Have no opinion?

11. Please give a brief explanation of your answer to question 10, perhaps giving some background from your personal experience.
12. Many observers feel that the matter of a "crisis of public confidence" in American education is still a major problem. Do you:

( ) Agree strongly?
( ) Agree somewhat?
( ) Disagree somewhat?
( ) Disagree strongly?
( ) Have no opinion?

13. In 1973, Sidney P. Marland Jr., then assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, said that "education needs to put its case firmly and clearly before the public" to turn the tide of public opinion back to an attitude of support and understanding of the aims, achievements and needs of education in American society. Do you:

( ) Agree strongly?
( ) Agree somewhat?
( ) Disagree somewhat?
( ) Disagree strongly?
( ) Have no opinion

14. Some observers feel that such a step also would be helpful in higher education. Do you:

( ) Agree strongly?
( ) Agree somewhat?
( ) Disagree somewhat?
( ) Disagree strongly?
( ) Have no opinion.
15. In the past, has THEC played any role in improving public attitude toward higher education? Please explain your answer briefly.

16. What, if any, role would you like to see THEC play in the future in this matter of improving public confidence in higher education?
17. In American society, there are mixed emotions about that activity commonly known as public relations — also called public information, public affairs, and some other names. Do you think public relations serves a useful function in our society?

( ) Yes  ( ) No

Explain briefly.

18. Some top administrators in higher education and other areas of American education have given public relations a major role in seeking improved support and understanding from the American people in the educational process and product. Do you:

( ) Approve strongly?
( ) Approve somewhat?
( ) Disapprove somewhat?
( ) Disapprove strongly?
( ) Have no opinion?

19. Does your answer include statewide coordinating agencies such as THHC?

( ) Yes  ( ) No
20. What, if any, has been the principal role of THEC's public relations staff in the past in seeking more favorable public opinion about higher education in Tennessee? (If no role, write "none".)

21. Would you like to see the THEC public relations staff continue in this same direction (as stated in No. 20)?
   ( ) Yes
   ( ) No  (Please list in rank order any additional roles you would like to see the public relations staff play.

22. In the past, what groups or "publics" have been the principal targets of THEC's public relations effort? List them in rank order of the importance given them by the staff.
23. What, if any, additional target publics should there be in the future?

24. Would you approve increased funding for THEC's public relations activities in the future?

( ) Yes  ( ) No

Explain briefly.

25. a. Do THEC staff members other than those in public relations play a role in seeking improved public opinion about higher education in Tennessee?

( ) Yes (specify staff member(s) by title)
( ) No

b. What, if any, roles would you like to see those other staff members play in public relations in the future?

( ) Additional future roles (please specify at least one)
( ) No additional future roles

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!
### APPENDIX C

A NATIONAL COMPOSITE OF STATEWIDE HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING AGENCIES

(Compiled from data in a questionnaire, 28 of 29 agencies responding.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population: 29</th>
<th>Responding: 28</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
<th>Enrollment (head count)</th>
<th>State Population*</th>
<th>Public Higher Education Budget*</th>
<th>Coordinating Agency Budget* (operating)</th>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Number of PR Professionals</th>
<th>Salary of PR Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>156,000</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>(138,000)</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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* 000's omitted ** Both work half-time in public relations.

1. Not reported.  2. Figures challenged due to possible typographical error; not used in calculations.
3. Does not include 150 proprietary institutions but includes 16 private institutions.  4. Includes 21 private institutions.
5. Insufficient data.  6. Includes 53 "non public" institutions.  7. Includes an estimated 30-50 private institutions.
8. Full-time; not including 27 part-time.  9. Also coordinates programs for 60 private institutions with an estimated $425 million operating budget. Total budgets estimated at $1.4 billion.
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