Tension and Collaboration:
Local Educational Improvement and National Change

by

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In the brochure describing "Alternative Higher Education: Its Relevance to the 1980's," the conference planners pose the expected and important question, "What is the role of federal policy in promoting educational innovation?" Clearly, that question was meant for us -- the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. Although our budget is small (a start of $10 million in 1972 has grown to $13.5 million in 1981), we are the only federal agency with a specific mandate to improve postsecondary education directly -- not through research, not through fellowships or financial aid, not through building funds, but through modest, action grants to practitioners. And yet when we gathered -- a group of ten or so program officers to discuss the paper, this was not the question we wanted most to answer.

For one thing, we have acted only in part like a federal agency, in part like a small independent, private foundation. For another, we would like this paper to be useful to leaders in the community of alternative higher education, and while it would be a delight to discuss funding strategy and Federal policy with an audience each of whom had its own 12 million dollar fund, we have had our moments of apprehension about the future of the one Fund (FIPSE), and recognize that change brought about largely by grant activities may be a strategy of diminishing possibility. And finally, while we can describe historically the Fund's self-perception as a federal policy-making agency, we are only now groping toward answers for the 1980's. We do not yet understand, for example how new Federal policies in relation to financial aid will be consistent with a long-

held principle of the Fund that favors student entitlement (through direct aid) and takes the goal of equity to mean access to high quality education for all learners.

The question we chose then concerns the nature and conditions for educational change, the interplay between local initiative and centralized action. For despite its deserved reputation as a "field responsive" agency -- we announce in our guidelines: "responsibility for design of improvements is in the field, not in Washington" -- the Fund has done much more than seek out the strongest local change projects. It has acted as a convener bringing together people and projects; as a critic of aspects of the field; and, as a creator, teaching people through guidelines and special programs to take action they might not have imagined. This kind of work and the sense of the field it demands belongs to the Fund staff, but to others as well who are working on a national acale to improve postsecondary education. They may be leaders in women's studies, in liberal education; in community development; they may be the heads of the professional associations, or practitioners with knowledge to share and problems to solve in cognitive development or basic skills. In short, this paper will attempt to suggest how the Fund staff and others "read" the field, develop a sense of timing for improvement activity, exploit social and political movements, and even turn resistance and reaction to advantage. More specifically, it will analyze the relative merits of degrees of activism in relation to several program ideas.

I. What is the Fund.

Before beginning our analysis of change strategies, we think it important to review the Fund's history and mandate. Established in

1972, the Fund was designed to respond to concerns of several major commissions and studies which were analyzing higher education in light of the ferment of the late sixties. Originally intended as a major foundation similar to the National Science Foundation, the Fund came through Congress as a small, semi-autonomous unit of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare with concerns almost exclusively to reform and improve postsecondary education through the mechanisms of grants and contracts. The Fund was to be administered by a small professional staff -- currently 11 -- a director, and a 15-member National Board of Advisors.

In its authorizing legislation, Congress identified eight broad purposes for which grants and contracts could be awarded. Almost a decade later, these still provide a significant agenda for change: 1) encouraging the reform, innovation, and improvement of postsecondary education and providing equal educational opportunity for all; 2) the creation of institutions and programs involving new paths to career and professional training and new combinations of academic and experiential learning; 3) the establishment of institutions and programs based on the technology of communications; 4) the carrying out in postsecondary educational institutions of changes in internal structure and operations designed to clarify institutional priorities and purposes; 5) the design and introduction of cost-effective methods of instruction and operation; 6) the introduction of institutional reforms designed to expand individual opportunities for entering and re-entering institutions and pursuing programs of study tailor to individual needs; 7) the introduction of reforms in graduate education, and in the structure of academic professions, and in the recruitment and retention of faculties; and 8) the creation

of new institutions and programs for examining and awarding credentials to individuals, and the introduction of reforms in current institutional practices related thereto.

Two decisions were particularly significant in setting up the funding strategy we will discuss here. To carry out its mandate, the Fund decided it would behave like a foundation rather than like a categorical grant program. That is, it rejected the notion of soliciting proposals to carry out specific, narrowly-framed kinds of reform and improvement; nor did it decide to solicit through priorities set by HEW. Rather it decided to respond to externally initiated proposals, and to write guidelines which would define only the broad social priorities the Fund would pursue. The guidelines might be described as an essay on current problems in postsecondary education. To persons outside of the government, these may seem like fine distinctions, but in fact, the Fund's choice of strategies broke with government tradition since most federal education grants ask applicants to respond to very specific problems and needs identified in Washington. Thus from the outside, the Fund created a tension between itself and the field using the guidelines as a kind of broadside, an interesting and provocative announcement to the postsecondary community of a broad agenda for change. The guidelines, of course, changed over the years, building on the insights the staff gained each year from reviewing proposals of many practitioners, and attempting as well to prophesy -- to define issues before they received full public discussion.

The Fund's primary vehicle for bringing about improvement has been the Comprehensive Program. In a two-stage process, between 1500 and 2000 applications a year are reviewed by outside readers, and by the

staff, and nearly 100 are funded. From time to time, however, the Fund sponsors targeted competitions to address specific problems -- basic skills, liberal education, unemployed youth -- but these special programs are funded only for a year or two, enough time to identify the strongest of practitioners, and to give visibility to the problem. Then the vehicle for continued activity becomes the Comprehensive Program once again, and the initiator of projects -- the practitioner in the field. Aside from these formal grant making activities Fund staff contribute to the postsecondary community in numerous ways: as other educators do they often convene informal groups to discuss specific problems -- rural education, cognitive development, financial aid, women's development, and literacy programs for Hispanic adults; they write for education journals, they give papers like this one, and they are perpetually called upon by practitioners, researchers, members of the professional associations and others to share the accumulated wisdom of nine years of travel through the hills and valleys of postsecondary reform.

II. Women's programs: The Fund as Responsive

In February, 1977, the Fund published "Projects/Women," the first of a series of occasional reports from the Fund. A hot give-away in the government, "Projects/Women" went into a second printing, and even produced a sequel -- "Projects/Women II, 1976-78." The first report indicated that $1.3 million of the $2.3 million spent on women's projects over the Fund's first three year period went to helping adult women determine their educational goals and attain them once enrolled; other grants were more diverse, and supported materials for women's studies, as well as bold attempts to reorient existing institutions or to create new non-sexist ones. The second report noted a 65% increase in spending

on women's programs. It sugggested as well the evolution of program ideas. For example, from 1976 to 1978, while programs for working and adult women still constituted the largest category of grants to women, now non-collegiate groups initiated work in the local community; and campus-based efforts attempted to serve special populations -- Spanish-speaking women, rural women, and welfare women. In addition, where the earlier report noted the absence of projects which focused on leadership development, women's conditions of work as faculty, or the extent to which traditional institutions had achieved a non-sexist environment, the second report and projects funded since 1978 have addressed each of these problems. Finally "Projects/Women I" mentioned only two projects concerned with women's entry into and persistence in math and science, but "Projects/Women II" outlined four projects which helped women to break into male dominated fields --two of them direct descendents of Wesleyan's project to dispell "math anxiety" funded in 1975, and a review of current projects discloses several more.

This record is a particularly interesting one to analyze. One might say that without doing much at all except choosing strong projects, the Fund has accumulated an impressive portfolio designed to further women's education. Aside from the two retrospective reports, the Fund has sponsored no special competition on women's education, nor has it convened women project directors. The projects in the portfolio have a certain coherence; they can be "read" as advocating a set of conditions for achieving educational equity. The key here is to reflect on the way in which the Fund's priorities for the improvement of postsecondary education intersected with an aspect of sweeping movement for social change -- the women's movement. In creating programs for women, the

Fund was less an initiator than one among many actors -- women leaders on campus, private foundations, other state and federal funding agencies, the creators of new federal and state legislation, and the adult woman herself with new expectations of domestic life, her place in economic life, and her right to education.

Although the Feminine Mystique was published in 1963, the beginnings of the second wave of feminism can be more accurately found in the civil rights movement of the mid-sixties. As Blacks gave voice to their own ambivalence about white "help" in their movement, white men and women began a period of self-scrutiny -- among the revelations, women's unequal status in a movement for equity. This irony, apparent first to young movement activists, then to educated women on college campuses produced, starting in the early seventies, a search for intellectual and historical roots of women's positions and resulted in the rapid blossoming of women's studies. But to women who had children and a family in the early seventies, consciousness-raising, courses on Colette and Virginia Woolf, and even interest in a previously male sex-typed career seemed either frivolous or remote. For these women, the issues were neither psychological nor intellectual but practical. Unfortunately, child care, legal rights, welfare, and job opportunities were not the business of most women's studies programs.

The Fund came into being just as adult women were beginning to turn in ever increasing force to postsecondary education. Thus it was able to see in the deluge of proposals to address the educational problems of women an agenda for postsecondary improvement that coincidentially filled a void in the women's movement. According to its mandate in support of equal educational opportunity, but perhaps not to the satisfaction of

academic feminists, the Fund chose to support women who had the least political clout, physical freedom, or financial resources. And it chose to carry out this work in a particular way. The Fund recognized that it had leverage for broad-ranging change within institutions seeking older women students to bolster their declining enrollments.

The Fund's first guidelines included women in a category labeled "the new clientele", but set simple access and remediation strategies off from "imaginative efforts to restructure the educational experience itself..." The Fund's choice of projects reflects a certain tension with the field. Most academic administrators preferred to "fit" the student to the school, what we call the "fix her" model, rather than to force faculty to yield up approaches they had always used with young women. The Fund's choice then to support Barat College and Mary Baldwin College are examples of the way it signaled its seriousness about thoroughgoing change.

Barat was determined to eliminate barriers preventing older students from enrolling and sought funds to speed its conversion from a predominantly residential college for 18-22-year-olds into a postsecondary institution also serving needs of returning community women. With Fund support, Barat accomplished a transformation so that over 40% of its students are currently 25 or older. Initially, returning community women were served, prior to and after enrollment, by a separate, Fund-supported office combining counseling services and advocacy functions. The office performed valuable service in promoting equity for part-time, older women, prompting more convenient scheduling of classes, year-round course offerings, car pools, better child care, rearranged office hours, and changes in matters as mundate as mail boxes and vending machines. Eventually, however, the

office came to be resented for the "separate and special" aura it put on the women it served and for the ways in which its existence allowed "regular" college offices to continue unchanged. Barat therefore abolished the office, folded its functions and personnel into existing offices, then undertook self-study and retraining to assure that the total college acted throughout to serve the needs of enrolled women of all ages.

More recently the Fund has entered a second stage in improving women's education. It is currently attempting to alter the entire curriculum in regard to women, and to alter the academic environment as well. Projects funded, however, are not merely new courses, but rather thoroughgoing attempts to affect content of instruction and working conditions sometimes nationally, and usually institutionally. Simultaneously, the Fund is supporting fewer projects for older women coming onto campus for the first time. In part this trend in funding is a result of the market place -- we are simply not seeing much new in regard to "reentry" programs. In part, the Fund is taking its cue from the activity of a network of women leaders who have gained national visibility and an audience by myriad activities over a decade in the campus-based women's movement.

The support for visible leaders is a clear instance of the Fund's support for initiatives generated almost exclusively from the field and, as such, it is unusual. Most often, Fund project directors are not nationally known; the Fund prides itself on identifying new generations of leaders, as it did in its first years of helping older women. Today, however, among women project directors are Florence Howe, founder of the Feminist Press and key actor in the women's studies movement; Bernice Sandler, of AAC's Project on the Status and Education of Women, the

oldest organization dealing with women in academe; Elaine Reuben, director of the National Women's Studies Association; Gerda Lerner, a respected historian of women and president elect of the Organization of American Historians; Cynthia Secor, director of Mid-Atlantic HERS, and the Bryn Mawr Summer Institute for Women Administrators; and Sheila Tobias, author of Overcoming Math Anxiety. Of these women, none except Tobias had either held a previous Fund grant, nor was it any way dependent on the Fund for public recognition. These women, along with Fund women staffers, feminists in their own right, attend national conferences on women, form the small national policy making groups which guide the movement, and shape the agendas for women's programs of Ford, Carnegie, Rockefeller, and other private foundations. In short, by having their projects in the Fund portfolio, we are not only improving the education of women students, but buying into the actions of a group of women pioneers -- very important for the Fund if we are to keep our current reputation for being committed to taking risks, and staying out ahead on women's issues.

Fund activity to "mainstream" new content about women illustrates our role as one among many supporters in a movement that might actually be described as self-propelled, or driven by the energy of a national leadership in women's studies. "Mainstreaming" came about, as one historian and activist in the movement put it, by "internal combustion." Those who had been working for a decade in women's studies programs recognized simultaneously the limitations of their ghettoized existence. Set off from the traditional disciplines, women's programs turned increasingly inward or leaped from the women's studies office to the community off

campus, bypassing faculty and students who know least the advances in knowledge about women coming from women's research.

The idea of mainstreaming has its origin in the movement to integrate the handicapped into the public school classroom; for women's studies it meant variously integrating new material about women into disciplines, commiting male faculty to do research about women, or reexamining the mission of an institution in light of the best interests of its women students. In 1979, we funded the Organization of American Historians (actually the project directors were two historians who had been active in the OAH's women's caucus) to revise the curricula for two widely taught freshman survey courses: History of Western Civilization, and the Survey of American History, and in 1980 we supported Wheaton College in a three year attempt to integrate more study of women into the entire basic level curriculum. This year the Fund is supporting the American Political Science Association and the Feminist Press with the cooperation of the Modern Language Association, to initiate for their disciplines what the historians have already begun in theirs, and Montana State University to disseminate regionally a mainstreaming project previously funded by the Women's Education Equity Act. The Montana State project brings together a network of diverse institutions in a rural, isolated geographic area including an Indian-controlled community college, a mining and technology institute, and several small state institutions. Faculty-administrator teams learn how to stimulate research on women's issues on their campuses, and are expected to develop and teach revised courses. The Feminist Press grant will build on work previously funded by NEH to reconstruct and critique the standards by which certain works become part of the literary canon, and to produce a new collection of literature for introductory American literature courses.

The National Endowment for the Humanities and Lily Foundation were also in the act supporting major summer training institute for college faculty, and the Rockefeller Family Fund sponsored a small working conference in Princeton this August, "Integrating Women's Studies into the Curriculum." This meeting brought together women directing "integrating" projects, (some funded by FIPSE, others not), consultants, and funders to produce a paper on the results of their work to be presented at a Ford-funded conference this Fall at Wingspread intended to acquaint chief academic officers and college presidents with the impact women's studies can have on the liberal education curriculum.

One might ask why the Fund joined in when it would be bumping elbows with so many other funders. Why did it respond to the field with significant support for mainstreaming? The Fund had learned that resistance to change where sexism is the issue is wide-spread and profound. A decade of work on women's education only seemed to reveal new and more difficult work to be done to promote equity. The women we supported have established records of excellence in their work on behalf of women. Most have made women's education a life mission. Furthermore, they are active nationally, and will thus spread the word about their projects (and other Fund work) in the course of daily conversation, and would keep us up-to-date on new ideas. Secondly, once we had probed carefully to find a persuasive argument that mainsteaming would not compete with, and ultimately undermine or damage women's studies departments by drawing resources to the unconverted, we saw the power in their idea, and the link of such projects with our own agenda.

With 51% of college students now women, it is timely to question the degree of sex bias across the curriculum. While there are nearly

1000 institutions with considerable women's studies activity, recent studies indicate that students outside of women's studies are unlikely to encounter much content about women in the liberal education surveys, or in many majors. Most disciplines have avoided struggling with feminist scholarship which challenges established structures of knowledge and methodologies. In addition, women students still encounter an atmosphere of "unexpectation." From the Fund's perspective, support of twenty or thirty visible projects (linked to each other but not all supported by the Fund) will enable the mainstreaming idea to catch on nationally, and a process will begin which has the prospect of becoming self-sustaining. Finally, such projects abet another more thorny Fund agenda -- the improvement of general education; women's concerns have been perhaps the most dramatic source of critique of the content of the established curriculum over the past decade. (More on this subject in section III, "The Fund as Convener and Critic.")

In regard to women's programs, the Fund's responsive stance has served it well. From its initial work with adult women students, the Fund has perhaps learned a lesson about the effective "use" of a social change movement. The strength of the movement was such that the moral imperative to treat older women as first class citizens, to take them seriously as thinkers and workers, and to attend to their practical needs gave substance and content to educational programs which might otherwise have been cut from a traditional mold. The Fund used this moral imperative when it requested applicants to consider restructuring "the educational experience itself." That organizing strategies have more clout within a social change movement is obvious, but the key then is to find the intersection between such a movement and necessary educational change.

III. The Fund as Convener and Critic: Examining the Varieties of LIberal Education

Over the past years, the Fund has sponsored four national projects. The most recent of these, "Examining the Varieties of Liberal Education" (NP IV) provides an interesting contrast with the Fund's response to women's education, and illustrates the kind of analysis of the field and the portfolio which initiate action in our office. NP IV also demonstrates the ways in which threads spun out from various sets of projects are woven into a new, and often unexpected, fabric. In general, Fund staff "reads" the field through the Comprehensive Program. Though an imperfect mirror of new ideas or insights, the nearly 2000 proposals a year reviewed by the staff indicate clusters of problems affecting numerous learners. Among recent applications, one could readily identify a cluster of community-based programs for Hispanics, attempts to institute skills programs across the curriculum, pre-college activities to help minorities enter the sciences, the initiation of computer-literacy courses, and the impact of economic trends on the situation of unemployed workers. The strongest proposals in each cluster are filled with ideas about what's wrong and what's right in higher education.

In the competitions of 1977 and 1978, and in conversations with directors of projects to help adult women and other "non-traditional" students enter college, the staff began to notice an interesting theme. No longer did proposers seem merely to stress their students' needs for support services, vocational counseling and training, or revised admissions procedures; they sought as well assurance that postsecondary institutions would meet the intellectual and social needs of the "new" students. Bold ideas for academic programs which would integrate complex theoretical material with life experience came, for example, from Brooklyn College's

Project Chance; and the National Congress of Neighborhood Women, among other community-based institutions, provided women the opportunity to study neighborhood history and local social issues using the tools of liberal education. Similar ideas came as well from adult external degree programs like those at the Vermont Community Colleges and Loretto Heights College in Denver. In each program, students had an evident passion to know history, to study ethics and the process of forming values, to practice new analytic and problem-solving skills. In "Designing for Development," a brief monograph about such programs written by project directors and introduced by program officer Carol Stoel, the authors define the process of education as they had come to see it through their work with adult women. They contrast education as an "additive experience" with education as a process of "qualitative change or "perspective transformations." In their view, "the curriculum promotes perspectives transformation by mediating the relationship between the individual and the environment. At best, it creates an "optimal incongruity" or tension between the two, and it provides a forum in which the students can explore that tension." Such statements, of course, have the familiar ring of the goals statements in the catalogues of small liberal arts colleges. Indeed, at their core, these women's programs were reviewing and questioning seriously the purpose of liberal education just as college faculties often do.

During the same years, the Fund was supporting a second cluster of projects of a seemingly different cost. These projects originated in the self-scrutiny at liberal arts colleges, and included attempts to substitute new creative curricular and institutional arrangements for the old core courses or distribution requirements, as well as attempts

to come at the goals of liberal education from an unexpectedly different angle--a focus on end results or outcomes. Some mass institutions attempted to humanize mass education through cluster colleges and community-building activities. The University of California-Berkeley's Strawberry Creek offered freshmen and sophmores interdisciplinary seminars under the leadership of tenured faculty. Others raised the old question, what is an educated person, with a new twist. ETS developed an assessment of students achievement with respect to several forms of academic competency often associated with general education--partly in an attempt to counter the strong tendency of BA programs to become more specialized at the expense of general education, partly to help institutions develop their own standards of achievement with respect to general education. Similarly, the American College Testing Program's COMP (College Outcomes Measures Project) defined, and then provided instruments for testing six areas of general education knowledge and skills; Communicating, solving problems, clarifying values, functioning within social institutions, using science and technology and using art.

From the point of view of students served women's programs and liberal arts reform had little in common, yet staff discussions revealed some surprising and unexpected links which, to our knowledge, had not been previously recognized. For in formulating their own critique of liberal education, in demanding that it live up to its promises, the older women students had exposed in it a certain hollowness and stagnation. Their critique matched the more mainstream perception which had prompted COMP, ETS, and Strawberry Creek's reforms: that liberal education had lost its ability to initiate students into a national consensus about values and culture, to prepare them for productive citizenship and adult

work. In these disparate movements, one at the periphery of higher education, the other at the center of academe, the Fund saw an opening for an inquiry into the status of general education, the beginning of an open dialogue which would introduce some strong, new voices into an old conversation. Spurred to action in part by the public acclaim for Harvard's just unveiled core curriculum, in part by the evident richness, of these clusters in our own portfolio, Carol Stoel and Richard Hendrix, Fund program officers, wrote guidelines for National Project IV, "Examing the Varieties of Liberal Education," a competition designed to select and convene fourteen promising liberal education projects, for a seventeen month period of collaborative reflection, assessment and model-building. In its work as convening agency, the Fund stepped beyond identifying the natural clusters which emerged in the Comprehensive Program portfolio, and took active steps to arrange an unlikely marriage.

"Examining the Varieties of Liberal Education" represented a competition which, on its surface, addressed primarily traditional institutions of higher education. But there were telltale signs in the new guidelines that indicated that as it had expanded the definition of postsecondary learner, the Fund would here seek to broaden perceptions of the appropriate locus and content of liberal learning. The word "varieties" for example, signalled the field that "the benefits and outcomes of liberal education are sought by Americans of very different ages, backgrounds, aspirations, and social classes. Given this diversity of interest, not all liberal education goals will be shared by all individuals and communities. We have also learned that serious efforts in pursuit of liberal education goals occur in a much greater variety of settings and institutional contexts than is usually recognized. As a minimum, this range includes

worksites, cultural facilities, community-based programs, two-year and four-year colleges, universities, and technical schools." And the broader, older term "liberal education" was chosen over "general education" in part because "general" often refers to courses taken before the major, and we wanted to signal our perception that college-level learning includes much more-- career preparation, personal exploration, as well as learning gained from the ambience or educational setting. In convening the selected projects, we thus intended to make a statement. The usual prophetic voices in higher education used phrases like "common learning," "shared national experience," "interdependency", "society's collective claims on its member"; we professed a less harmonious vision. We did not believe that it was the goal or even the appropriate place of liberal education to heal rifts in a nation divided by diversity of economic position, social class, gender, national identity, cultural habits or intellectual tradition. As a funding agency, we had long embraced the richness and variety created by decentralized educational change; and we felt confident that rigorous standards of quality could be used to test the impact of liberal learning in programs as varied as Saint Joseph's College in Indiana with its commitments to the "witnessing to specific Christian values," the African-American music program at SUNY-Old Westbury with its underlying assumption that musical improvisation releases creativity, and the External Degree program for Adults at Vermont State Colleges with it roots in developmental stage theory. In short, we wanted to provide visible evidence that from the center to the periphery of higher education, there were challenges to what seemed the public assessment-- there would be an insistence on common learning or there would be incoherence, chaos, and a decline in the value of liberal education.

National Project IV held some surprises for the Fund staff. While the first paragraph of the guidelines singled out 2 year colleges, community-based institutions, museums, libraries, businesses, and unions as appropriate applicants, very few applied. It was not until the project's culminating conference, "Old Promises/New Practices," that the full range of liberal education programs publically announced themselves. Union educators and community developers shared the floor with mavericks from the elite institutions, and professors of higher education found themselves in conversation with the directors of storefront programs. The director of a community-based program for Hispanics challenged the concept of remedial programs to the surprise of some. The directors of a community development BA program attached to New Jersey's St. Peter's College, described a liberal education program that began with the community residents' question: "Why do we believe this city to be corr[illegible]?" In the next room, a professor of English spoke on "theories of knowledge and the curriculum". The conference papers, soon to be published, are themselves an array of perspectives and topics.

By its own power to convene, the Fund helped to consolidate the outsiders, the alternative voices in liberal education reform who might have undervalued the power of their own efforts to compete with those of the Harvards, Berkeleys, and Stanfords. In our opinion, the balance of power needed to be shifted on this particular topic to a broader, and less "prestigious" group. The higher education community needed not another set of definitions, another set of promises, another group of presidents, president emeriti, researchers and philosophers. Rather, it needed to have identified in Norman, Oklahoma, in Talladega, Alabama, or

Manassas, Virginia spokespersons for examined practice. These are the teachers, planners, curriculum developer, the occassional dean whom the Fund helped to find a common language for explaining their programs to each other, and who, through conference and publications, become a resource for a broader audience.

IV. The Fund as Creator

One might conclude of the Fund: All knowledge has its genesis in the Comprehensive Program, but how the staff shapes, interprets, and builds from that well of ideas depends on analysis of the postsecondary climate in relation to moment. This is not to say that the Fund always swims with the tide, but rather that strategies for change must be developed within a broader context. With women's programs, there was little question that despite the Fund's plunge forward to serve adult working women, the least powerful group in the early women's movement, both postsecondary institutions and the movement itself would be well served by supporting our choices. In our coherent and vigorous effort to promote the reform of liberal education, the visible efforts of the elite colleges contradicted the Fund's notion of progress, thus it took steps to help consolidate and make known a variety of alternatives. The Fund took the position that there were numerous ways to reassure the public that the promises of liberal education were being played out in imaginative practices. But in some instances, the Fund has ventured into the void quite alone, taking up the banner for a risky idea just because no one else has. "Better Information for Consumer Choice" (National Project I), was one such venture, and the recent Mina Shaughnessy Learning-from-Practice Scholars Program is another. In each of these, the Fund has attempted to create through a particular funding strategy support for an idea-- the first with limited, and instructive success. The second is still at an early stage of development.

Creating I: Consumer Choice

The Fund has been perhaps the preeminent funder of projects to provide information and advisement services to assist individuals in making choices about participation in postsecondary education. In the Fund's first grants cycle in 1973, awards were made to the Regional Learning Service in Syracuse and the Women's Inner-City Educational Resource Service (WINNERS) in Boston among others. These community-based organizations provided educational counseling for individuals wishing to enter college. Informally trained counselors familiar with the particular community, and the typical problems faced by older persons who had been out of school a number of years, discussed career and educational choices with their clients. Often the counselor acted as the prospective learner's advocate; she helped the student to complete her financial aid forms, or called admissions officials to set up appointments.

At the Fund's annual project directors meeting, directors of "brokering" projects shared experiences with each other, and in 1975, Fran Macy, the founder of the Regional Learning Service, proposed that the Fund support a national network of such organizations. Thus was born the National Center for Educational Brokering. Since that time, this National Center has helped to spread this idea to a number of other locations.

Another grant was to the Oregon Career Information System, a new statewide, computerized information data base about career opportunities and training requirements. They proposed to add information about educational opportunities at colleges and universities to their existing system, so that individuals coudl receive guidance in pursuing the training requirements suggested by the career possibilities. Initially, this service was directed at high school students, and high school payments for the use of computer terminals provided the financial backbone of the system.

These and other projects, emanating from the field in response to some quite general guideline problem areas, such as "encouraging an open system", led the Fund to solicit more specifically in this area. Beginning with the 1976 guidelines, the Fund announced its interest in the following problem: "helping people make better choices about whether, when, and where to enroll for education beyond high school" (later changed to "participate in education beyond high school"). Over the next several years, the Fund supported a sizeable number of projects to provide brokering services not only through community-based organizations but also through high schools, colleges, higher education consortia, libraries, workplaces, and the media. One strand of these brokering projects, that concerned with consumer choice, captured the imagination of Fund staff, particularly Russ Edgerton and Ray Lewis. Most brokering and career information systems, they realized, relied on partial and problematic information about postsecondary institutions.

College catalogues rarely included information about the comparative strengths and weaknesses of departments on campus or data on post-graduation placement. The Fund, therefore, took a more aggressive stance than usual and outlined not only a specific version of this general problem of improving choice but also a solution. We had in mind an improved version of the college catalogue called an "institutional prospectus," after the business term for the brochure a corporation prepares when it intends to go public. To test the idea, we put together a national project ("Better Information for Student Choice" (NPI) which selected eleven institutions to develop their individual prospectuses and to collaborate with each other. This national task force produced materials, and began a network later funded as the National Center for Helping Organizations Improve Choice in Education (CHOICE). Under this grant, CHOICE assisted 19 institutions to improve their information

provision efforts, and established a consulting service, newsletter, and library now under the aegis of the National Association of College Admissions' Counselors.

On the surface, these efforts have had seemingly little lasting impact. Most colleges still do not warn students to go elsewhere for theoretical physics, musics, or a heterogeneous student body, nor do they provide much data on graduate career placement. Counting on a strong consumer movement, the Fund perhaps misjudged its power to bring about change by appealing to "truth in packaging" as a standard, worthy of higher education institutions. In fact, the adversial stance undergirds much of the consumer movement, and, indeed, consumer choice projects since NPI have come not from colleges, but from consumers and their advocates.

Perhaps the most interesting recent stepdaughter of the "better information" initiative is Everywomen's Guide to College and Universities. A project of the Feminist Press, this book will supplement the standard guides to colleges by supplying information about particular aspects of the educational environment-- its "healthiness" for women students, its degree of freedom from sex bias. The guide will include data from nearly 600 institutions on number of women faculty, athletic facilities, women's studies curriculum, and the like. A secondary goal is to encourage institutions to make changes in their treatment of women so as to have a clean bill of health published. One suspects the Everywoman will sell well, but if one were to hypothesize about its future success one would come back not to the logic and good sense of the consumer choice project, but rather to the women's movement. Without social change forces operating beyond the Fund, projects are less likely to "take-off," to have impact on the postsecondary community without further funding.

Creating II: Mina Shaughnessy "Learning from Practice" Scholars Program

Although "Mina Shaughnessy," our new small grants program, represents a radical departure for the Fund -- we have never made grants to individuals before--it is also close to the bone. Our own inability to take time off to write is a constant source of frustration and lament. Well-paid but over committed bureaucrats, we rarely seem to get out from proposal review cycles, personnel actions, guideline revisions, and internal crises to think through and write about any single subject. And almost daily, in conversations with project directors we are reminded that lessons learned from practice are too often ephemeral. There are too many research studies, too little "useable knowledge." Others besides the Fund staff have remarked the dearth of books like Shelia Tobias' Overcoming Math Anxiety, Peter Elbow's Writing without Teachers, Mina Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations, Paolo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and Ira Shor's new Chritical Teaching and Everyday Life. (The considerable impact of Freire's work on American education is being documented by our own project at the Latino Institute). Among most funders, in the eyes of tenure committees, in the academic world as a whole such works are not honored. Perhaps they are insufficiently difficult to be taken seriously; perhaps only novelists are respected for writing from experience.

In the Fall of 1979, the Danforth Foundation announced that it would no longer be granting graduate fellowships. Although no one has ever counted the number of Fund project directors who are former Danforths, Kents, or members of the Society for Values in Higher Education, the correlation is probably high. Out of an old Christian concern with moral value, Danforth had emerged as the prestigious fellowship program to fund individuals on the basis of their personal qualities, their

promise as college teachers, their ability to stir debate and take moral action -- a profile not unlike that of many project directors. The fellowship's termination and our quick review of diminishing resources elsewhere encouraged program officer Alison Bernstein to argue for an idea that the staff has discussed on occasion. Shouldn't the fund make small grants to individuals to fill the void? The debate that followed centered less on the merits of a program, than on the proper approach. Among those whose advice we sought were other funders, project directors, our advisory board, members of the department.

At a session on "Burnout," at our November 1979 project director's meeting, we tested the idea of grants to individuals. Claiming varying states of physical, emotional, and intellectural exhaustion, the panelists pleaded for an "R & R" fellowship--no bottom line, time to reflect, if a project came forth, so much the better. Despite the Fund's reputation for iconoclasm such freedom at the taxpayer's expense appeared unwise, however humane. Staff members conceived of a more structured program to help activist/scholars. These were people with the intellectual stamina to finish disserations and to publish who had not done traditional scholarly work. Interdisciplinary interests and activism on behalf of postsecondary reform were often reasons that they were judged to be less competitive than others who presented more traditional evidence of scholarly productivity.

We could help them stay in the academic game by giving them time off to write, and thus protect a cadre of reformers. In the bargain, we would require "reporting out" on significant innovations. Thus our national agenda for postsecondary improvement came to compete with the predicament of individuals in the requirement of a product of significance to the national community of educational practitioners. We hoped that by the competitive process, the rigorous review, the post-selection

publicity to confer prestige on the work of educational reform. We would attempt to create an audience for practical scholarship. Mina Shaughnessy's book, Errors and Expectations, became the symbol of the work we hoped to support. And in naming the program for her--not an easy business in the government--we also to signal our deep appreciation for the contribution of a writer and a teacher.

Director of the CUNY Resource Center, Mina had been a Fund National Board of Advisors member at the time of her death. Modest, tough, serious, a self-made writing teacher without a doctorate, Mina's work had been reviewed by Alden Dunham, program officer of the Carnegie Corporation. Her work on the hidden logic in the writing of underprepared students struck him as brillant, a stunning contribution to our knowledge about teaching writing. He had to convince her to take the offer of secretarial help from the Foundation to put her work in writing. Her book, drawn largely from experience teaching thousands of remedial students, not only presents an analytic framwork for understanding student errors in written English, it also gives some practical advice on teaching specific skills. In our first year's guidelines, we explained: "The Fund is convinced there are others like Mina Shaughnessy, who, if given additional support to relieve them from the demands of other commitments or to obtain needed services, can make a lasting and profound contribution to postsecondary education improvment. These practitioners are working in all sectors of the field--as faculty, consultants, evaluators, administrators, and counselors in colleges and universities, in state and local agencies, in unions and museums. Unlike traditional fellowships that support academic reserach directed solely to the scholarly community, this program will seek to support scholarship based on actual practice,"

The review of the first year's 430 applications suggested that the Fund had ventured onto risky ground. Numerous applicants wrote scholarly research proposals as if the words "practical scholarship" had no meaning; others tried unsuccessfully to call traditional research the results of experience; and some described their practice in a simple narrative, missing entirely our injunction to reflect, analyze, and synthesize. What we learned from the field then confirmed our mission--through the Shaughnessy grants we are actually attempting to teach practitioners to trust their own experience as a source of valid and powerful information about change. We encourage them to blend the practical and theoretical, to look on their worksites as laboratories, to draw conclusions not from the social scientific models, but from the trial and error of everyday life.