

Address of
GOVERNOR ALLAN SHIVERS
To Texas Commission on Higher Education
Senate Chamber, Austin, Texas
Wednesday, September 23, 1953

FOR RELEASE AT 10 a. m.

You ladies and gentlemen who are members of Texas' first official Commission on Higher Education have accepted a bitter-sweet assignment.

I believe most of you will agree that the job facing this Commission has gone begging for a long time. It has been thought about, worried about, talked about -- and, of course, argued about -- for many years.

Now, at last, this body of informed, interested, and public-spirited citizens, duly authorized by the 53rd Texas Legislature, has come together in its first meeting. This is a gathering I have wanted to see ever since I began my work in State government. I have high hopes not only for the constructive outcome of the session you are having today, but also for the long-term accomplishments of this much-needed group.

The State colleges and universities of Texas always pose a serious problem when the Legislature considers their financial support. It is difficult to know how to do the right thing -- that is, to provide adequate funds for higher education and at the same time to avoid spending more than is fair to the taxpayers of the State. The question lies not in whether we need higher education, nor in the further question of whether enough money ought to be spent for it. Texans always have responded affirmatively on both of those counts. To get at the heart of the problem, you must determine, by objective and impartial standards, the amounts and varieties of higher education required for our young people, where it should be offered, and how much we can afford to pay for it. At this moment, no one answer is available. We are looking to this Commission on Higher Education for the answers.

Since we do look to you for the answers, it is my opinion that neither I nor any person or group outside the ranks of this Commission should presume to tell you, in advance, what answers to find.

There are bound to be a few conflicting opinions about a subject as important as higher education. I am sure that any differences which may arise can be resolved satisfactorily. I believe that the sincerity which I am confident will underlie all of your deliberations soon will convince everyone that the members of this Commission have the interests of the entire State at heart. I know that is one of the chief considerations upon which I based the selection of my eleven appointees to this Commission and, as I heard the roll called, I was impressed with the high caliber of all of the thirty-one people who make up your total membership.

My optimism is increased when I remember that, in addition to your regular members, the law which created this Commission provides that the Council of College Presidents of our State-supported institutions of higher learning will be available to you in an advisory capacity. This will be the finest type of professional assistance from those who know most about the problems of our colleges and universities. The facilities of the Texas Legislative Council also will be available to you, as well as those of the Governor's office.

I hope all of my fellow-Texans who are interested in higher education will give this new Commission a chance to perform successfully in an atmosphere of constructive neutrality and, especially in the early phases of the Commission's work, will refrain from any attempts to advance competitive schemes or feelings of prejudice.

In the long run, I do not believe anyone stands to lose from the activities of this Commission which, in the language of the statute, is a "facility or instrument of State government" designed for the purpose of "re-examining the role and scope of public agencies of higher education, with due attention to the needs of our citizens, the quality of education offered, the traditions and resources of State colleges and universities, and to the efficiency and economy of a complete plan for higher education."

Your mission is positive rather than negative. It will not surprise me if you discover that, by reason of Texas' growing population, changing economy, and increasing technical specialization, we need more facilities for higher education rather than fewer.

The industries of Texas -- petroleum, chemical, and many others -- cannot be operated, nor can our basic problems such as that of water supply be solved, nor can livestock raising and agricultural pursuits and business affairs be carried on with increasing success if the foundation of a sound and ever-improving program of education is lacking. We have to educate a growing stream of engineers, physicians, lawyers, teachers, clergymen, semi-professionals, and ordinary good citizens.

It will take people with highly trained minds to make progress in the Texas of tomorrow - - and those minds will have to be trained in the humanities and the arts as well as in technology if they are to savor the full significance of the world in which they live, and if they are to direct our State and nation toward realization of the finest human and religious values.

To make education of this extent and quality possible, we must husband every one of our resources. Nothing can be wasted in the realms of money, personnel, time, or buildings and equipment. No one institution could handle such a job alone. What we must demand and get is an outstanding, well coordinated, mutually reinforcing system of higher education, composed of relatively independent State colleges and universities.

We now have the basis for that kind of systematic higher education Texas. It is possible that investigation will show comparatively few changes to be necessary. But our

institutions of higher learning are sure to benefit from careful studies of the type this Commission will be conducting.

State-supported higher education belongs to all of the people of Texas. I sincerely believe that you members of this Commission will keep that fact ever before you, and that you will be able to rise above sectional and other differences to help in the molding -- and holding -- of a first class educational system worthy of Texas and of the unlimited mental resources of our students.

I wish you well.