INDICTMENT OF THE INSTITUTION CALLED "A UNIVERSITY" (A SUMMARY STATEMENT)

John N. Warfield
George Mason University
Fall, 1996

What is wrong with the institution called "a university"? The university maintains inadequate communications; sustains an inadequate infrastructure that is not matched to learning requirements; and demonstrates a widespread lack of quality in learning opportunities that it provides in terms of (a) its academic educational practices, (b) its internal human relations, and (c) its administrative decision-making. A more detailed, if abbreviated, exposition appears below.

INADEQUATE COMMUNICATIONS

• The university does not present to its publics a clear and contemporary understanding of what it is, what it does, and what it plans to do.

• The university learns from the past only those bureaucratic lessons that protect its image to the general public; when it ought to be creating a new and authentic, understandable image, that can be sustained when examined in depth by non-academic external bodies (its former students, now in responsible positions in society).

INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE

• The university infrastructure is suitable, at best, for working with limited kinds of educational practices; and the university seems indifferent to or unaware of the importance of matching infrastructure with requirements for effective educational practices, except at the most superficial level.

• Planning in the university is largely restricted to architectural and land-application concerns, and reflects high-level administrative emphasis on its resource allocations, rather than a studied attention to what is academically possible and desirable, but neglected.

INADEQUATE QUALITY IN LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Inadequate Academic Quality in Educational Practice.

• The university does not reflect the importance of integrated context, content,
and process in its educational practices; but instead allows content to be presented without adequate context, and with outmoded process

- The university ignores, in its learning opportunities, issues of system design, although every major crisis or large-scale system in society demonstrates constantly the pervasive social need for high-quality design practice

- The university allows itself to be victimized by academic fads, especially in the professional schools, accepting popular practices without assessment

- The university faculty makes no articulated provision for applying tested theory and methods for working with complexity in order to upgrade the quality of the disciplines and provide learning opportunities for individuals who will immediately encounter complexity in their organizational careers

**Inadequate Internal Human Relations.**

- The behavioral aspects of faculty performance in universities are ignored as a basis for high-quality educational practices

**Inadequate Administrative Decision-Making.**

- Internal administrative actions do not flow from any well-articulated, scholarly base, but rather appear as expeditious ad hoc responses to pressures, or efforts to curry favor among those who finance the institution. Administrators of universities deal selectively with restricted publics in ways that are unseen and unconnected to academic performance, but which may inhibit desirable academic improvements

- The university administration is incompetently structured to judge the academic quality of its offerings, does not do so, and does not seek any way to correct this situation

- The university administration exemplifies "bureaucracy", instead of striving to be a beacon of organizational practice for its learners, and for other organizations in the society

- The university administration allows itself to be victimized by fads, often accepting current practices without assessment in both academic and administrative domains, especially those fads that appear to be consistent in their scope with university image-preserving with external constituencies, or with superficial academic programs

- The university administration makes no specific provision for applying tested theory and methods for working with complexity in order to (a) upgrade the disciplines, (b) enhance its own administrative practices, and (c) provide learning opportunities for individuals who will immediately encounter complexity in their organizational careers

- The university administration seems to have no concept of design of new academic
roles (although it is very effective in creating new administrative roles) and continues to use publishing as the mode of evaluation at the margin for assessing faculty performance; causing massive overburden of the literature, printing of countless irrelevant and incompetent documents at great expense (literature pollution); and causing other critical academic roles to be neglected (engendering massive opportunity costs in academia)

c:\wpwin\indict\inditmnt

PRECEPTS OF GOOD EDUCATION/MANAGEMENT
(HOW GOOD PRACTICE IS VIOLATED)