

Mobley

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come more proactive. President Vandiver emphasized this during his tenure as president and we want to continue the institutional relationships that we're building around the world.

Q: What condition do you want to leave A&M in?

A: I'd like to see us clearly and broadly recognized as a major, comprehensive, internationally recognized University. I'd like to see, when I depart, an even stronger resource base. I'll be putting considerable emphasis on generating and developing private resources, scholarships, fellowships, endowed faculty positions, all those kinds of private resources that make us even better and stronger. I would hope that by the time I leave, our endowment and our sources of funding, other than state funding, are even stronger.

I'd like to leave with the best of our traditions still strong, well-respected and well-recognized. I want teaching and research to be seen as important, valued and rewarded. I want our graduates to have the opportunity to choose among many jobs and career options and to have opportunities to go to graduate school or whatever further education they might choose to pursue, including here.

Q: One of Dr. Vandiver's goals was to make A&M a "world" University. How much further does A&M have to go to attain this status?

A: It's not just the status thing; it's a networking thing, like some of the things I mentioned earlier. It's ensuring our graduates are globally literate. It's our faculty being actively involved with colleges throughout the world, important research issues and important conceptual issues. It's strong working relationships with institutions in other parts of the world and our research contributing to the solutions to the problems in advancing knowledge throughout the world.

All of those things are underway and there's no reason we can't accomplish becoming a "world" University. I think by the turn of the century, we should be there — clearly, widely recognized. I think as an institution, we're much better than a lot of people in various places around the country and the world recognize. One of our challenges is to tell the A&M story well, clearly and broadly and that will be one of my objectives as well.

Q: Do you think we'll reach that status within your term?

A: I would hope so, but the average tenure of a university president is about four years, but.

Q: How long do you plan to stay in office?

A: I don't know. I'll stay as long as I think I'm making a contribution and as long as the Board, faculty and others think I'm making a contribution. That question came up in the press conference the day I was appointed. I think generally I'd like to stay at least four years. I think I need that long for some of my ideas and hopefully the goals I talked about to get well established. I probably suspect that over 10 years I probably will have made whatever contribution I'm going to make and it might be time for fresh ideas and fresh leadership. I would think somewhere in the range from four to 10 years would be about right.

Q: Do you foresee any special challenges facing A&M?

A: In the short term, the economy of Texas still has some soft spots, so I think we'll have a challenging session of the legislature next time. The Legislative Budget Board staff will be here next Monday (Aug. 22), which is the first step in the budget process for 1990 and in October we'll have the full Legislative Budget Board hearing in Austin.

There are an awful lot of competing demands for state resources — the prison system, the public school system, highways, mental health and higher education along with many competing demands. I think those of

Texas' universities have been criticized for their lack of minority enrollment. What are A&M's strongest and weakest points in attracting and recruiting minorities?

A: One, we're a non-urban area. As I talk to a number of minority young people, especially from urban areas, where there are larger concentrations (of minorities), a number of these minority students believe they would be more comfortable in an urban area, if they are from an urban area.

Second, although I think we've turned the corner, I think in past years there wasn't that "critical mass" of minority students on this campus, so I think some minority students, in looking at A&M, felt there weren't enough minorities here and that they would be isolated. I think that's a perception problem that we've overcome.

On the positive side, we have very high minority retention rates. It seems once minorities choose to come to A&M, they enjoy it, they're successful and they stay. We need to get that message out and hopefully our minority Aggies will help us carry that message.

Right now we have over 1,000 black students and over 2,400 Hispanic students here, so there are large numbers. What gets reported are percentages. As a percentage of 40,000, those percentages look small. But in real numbers, those are real people and significant numbers. We just need to accelerate that development.

We have a strong minority scholarship program. We have a number of specialized counseling and support services and student groups for minority students. I think those things are all positive.

Statewide we have a problem in the high school dropout rate. The dropout rate is high in general, but it's particularly high among minority students. We have to be a part of solving that problem, I believe. We have to see that a higher percentage of minority students and students in general finish high school so they can get in the pool to go on to college. The College of Education here has a dropout research program with a dozen high schools in public school systems throughout the state. (The program) is trying to get a handle on this thing. It is a complex thing. It's family and environment and the high school they're going to. But we hope to be a contributor to turn around our high school dropout rate.

We now have Outreach Offices in Houston and Dallas, McAllen, down in the valley, and San Antonio. We're doing this jointly with the University of Texas and we're seeking to begin working with young people earlier — during the junior high years — and to be of assistance through the counselors and families and others to encourage young people to finish high school and to think about going to college, to know there is financial aid available. Hopefully many of those students will choose A&M — or U.T. as the case may be. At least they should know what their options are, at the very minimum, absolutely finish high school, to a community college or a vocational school or on to a four-year college. As long as they pursue what they are capable of pursuing. Each Outreach Office, I think, has made a difference in their first year, and we need to expand out and emphasize that.

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— Texas A&M president William H. Mobley

us in higher education need to continue to communicate as best we can to the legislature and the general public that state dollars spent on higher education are an investment and there are not many better investments that the state can make because we're clearly in a knowledge-based economy and society. It's the human capital that's going to make the difference going into the next century.

So we need a state that is producing very well educated people who are going to be the leaders, executives, professionals and citizens of the next century. The research output that's coming out today is the basis for the economy and society of the next decades. That's what is important and even when the economy continues to be sluggish, the legislature needs to continue to show confidence in higher education. That's an immediate challenge for us.

The minority enrollment recruitment and retention is a continuing challenge. We've made great progress at Texas A&M in terms of the number of minority students, but as a percentage of the student body, we've got a long way to go. The demographics of Texas are changing rapidly. The demographers indicate that by the year 2030, Anglos will be in the minority in Texas. We have a very rapidly growing Hispanic population, both in percentage and actual number. We have a growing Asian-American community and we have a significant black population. Texas A&M has to be part of educating the leadership of the state for the future. So we've got to continue to emphasize minority recruitment and retention in the student body, faculty, staff and administration and that's a challenge we are going to aggressively pursue. I'm committed to that.

Q: You mentioned minority recruitment as a challenge. Many of

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