

## DEAN'S CORNER

IN THE CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC POLICY LEXICON, “reinvention” and “transformation” have become catchy calls to arms. Even the relatively quiet calms of the academy are not immune. Periodically, every institution needs to step back and re-ask the basic questions that led to its founding. What need are we attempting to meet? What are our goals? How can we best achieve them? In an era where the pace of change, driven by technologies from information to nano, seems to increase exponentially, the imperative to adapt or perish seems particularly compelling. This is a daunting challenge for public policy schools. How do we prepare our students to provide leadership and wisdom in a future world, the contours of which can only be guessed at today, while at the same time helping practitioners and the public address pressing near-term problems?

It is a propitious time for us to undertake a close and thoughtful examination of our mission and our methods. With a new dean at the LBJ School of Public Affairs and a new president at the University of Texas at Austin, there is an opportunity to examine the assumptions behind what we do, to revalidate what has worked, and to look at new approaches that may better correspond to the world that is to come. The LBJ School has a proud history and a record of success—change should not be undertaken for its own sake. Yet we must be ready to implement new approaches if circumstances warrant.

It is indisputable that the world has changed in remarkable ways since the first class of the LBJ School entered in 1970. The phenomenon of globalization and interdependence pervades virtually every aspect of our lives—from our jobs and our leisure to our health and our security. The ubiquity of information technology increasingly marginalizes distance, fosters a world of “24/7” connectivity, and breaks down national, social, and cultural barriers. A whole new set of public “actors”—from NGOs to global corporations to international organizations, terrorists, and criminal enterprises—populates the policy space. The Soviet Union is gone, but failed states and new powers test our security. Global growth has lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, but dislocated equal numbers from traditional jobs, structures of family, and social safety nets, and has raised questions about long-term sustainability in terms of demographics, resource availability, and harm to the environment.

Despite these dramatic changes, it seems to me that our core mission remains as valid today as it was at the time of the LBJ School's founding: to train the next generation of leaders, to undertake the intellectual research and analysis to improve the quality of decision-making on matters of great public consequence, and to help nurture and inform the public debate about the pressing issues of our time. But it would be surprising if we thought that the ways we carried out that mission should not evolve in light of what has changed. In recent times, we at the LBJ School have already begun to adapt our approach to achieving our goals in light of the evolving environment. For example, we now offer our students the opportunity to concen-

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trate in one of seven areas (International Affairs; Urban and State Affairs; Social and Economic Policy; Technology, Innovation, and Information Policy; Public Management and Leadership; Nonprofit and Philanthropic Studies; and Natural Resources and the Environment) in addition to our traditional "generalist" approach. And we have hired a number of talented new faculty members to help shape this forward-looking program.

In the coming months, we will undertake a more comprehensive look at what we do and why we do it. Among the questions we need to ask: What kinds of students do we want to attract? What skills will they need to succeed in the world that stretches into the mid-21st century? How do we make sure that our graduates find career opportunities that allow them to exercise their skills? What are the priorities for our policy research? How do we make sure that the ideas we generate reach the right audiences at the local, state, national, and international level? How should we interact with the rest of the UT community, including undergraduates and alumni? Where will we find the resources we need to carry out these vital missions?

It is premature to state what conclusions we will reach concerning these and many other basic challenges. Over the next months we will begin a conversation with the full range of stakeholders who have an interest and a perspective on these questions—our faculty, students, staff, alumni, and other members of the UT community, as well as the future employers of our students, consumers of our research, and other public policy institutions. But I think it's safe to say that there are a few parameters that will certainly emerge from this process.

First, the LBJ School, like every other institution in our society, will need to take steps to incorporate the increasingly international dimension of public policy—by strengthening our focus on transna-

tional policy issues, expanding our exchanges and collaborations with important and valuable partners outside the United States, and preparing our students to work and lead in an increasingly globalized world.

Second, and closely related, we must expand our ability to conduct interdisciplinary research and training, in particular by strengthening our partnerships with others at UT. Our new collaborations, such as the Center for International Energy and Environment Policy (with the Jackson School of Geosciences and the College of Engineering) and the Center for National Security and Law (with the School of Law and College of Liberal Arts) are pioneer efforts in this direction.

Third, we must take greater account of the revolution in technology, particularly information technology, in our policy research priorities, in how we train our students, and in how we disseminate our knowledge. A major upgrade of our IT capacity, and its integration into our educational strategy (including long-distance learning and collaborative research), is a high priority.

Finally, we must make a renewed effort to inculcate the leadership component of our mission—at a time when there is deep and growing cynicism about our political processes and public service—through initiatives such as our new Center on Politics and Governance. Our goal must be greater than training and informing technical experts; we must strive to attract, educate, and motivate the next generation of public, private sector, and nonprofit leaders.

This is an ambitious agenda. But in my short time at the LBJ School, what has struck me above all else is the commitment of all the elements of our community to an ambitious, idealistic set of goals—not simply to accept the world as we find it, but to change it for the greater good. I look forward to working with you all to achieve this vision.