Ted Tapper
David Palfreyman

HIGHER EDUCATION DYNAMICS 34

Oxford, the Collegiate University

Conflict, Consensus and Continuity

Springer

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HIGHER EDUCATION DYNAMICS

VOLUME 34

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Conflict, Consensus and Continuity

Foreword by Sheldon Rothblatt

Springer

Prof. Ted Tapper
3a Park Lane
Otterbourne SO21 2HY
UK
kmtapper@aol.com

David Palfreyman
Oxford Centre for Higher Education
Policy Studies
New College
Oxford OX1 3BN
UK
bursar@new.ox.ac.uk

ISSN 1571-0378
ISBN 978-94-007-0046-8 e-ISBN 978-94-007-0047-5
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0047-5
Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg London New York

Library of Congress Control Number: 2010938283

To those two great landmarks in English higher education: The Franks and Robbins Reports

Foreword

In recent decades fine histories of universities have appeared, detailed and comprehensive. These include composite multi-volume histories, of which the most elaborate is the massive Oxford History of Oxford University. There are also general accounts, more panoramic, covering more than one country and more than one century. And of course articles and monographs in profusion, taking up the story of universities from their first appearance in the twelfth century. Not all publications bear directly on present-day concerns – historians should be entitled to some freedom. Furthermore, present-day concerns can be narrow and short-sighted, lacking in breadth and perspective. But insofar as the university, or rather, higher education, is regarded as a marker of national success, we are the richer for this scholarly activity.

Nevertheless, no matter that the subject of the history of colleges, universities and technical institutes is heavily studied, few works provide as concentrated an analysis of the inner functioning, the structure, the tensions and disputes arising from that structure, or the possible external triggers, as does this greatly revised version of Ted Tapper's and David Palfreyman's 10-year-old book on Oxford University, probably the most studied of any university in the world today.

Oxford is closely studied for any number of reasons, but amongst them is the fact that it has a unique history, even – outsiders may not always grasp the differences – when compared to Cambridge, which, as the authors often demonstrate, has moved towards a more centralised mode of leadership that, in their view, may well foretell Oxford's future. In the age of the celebrity or 'branded' university, which is also the age of world rankings, status hierarchies and fierce competition for prestige and resources, a world in which higher education is frequently discussed as a commodity (instead of as knowledge or culture), many universities claim to be unique. This is probably an Anglo-American obsession, although glimmers of it may be found in other nations. Laying claim to a special heritage has long been a part of the American college and university system, not only that segment driven by fees and endowments but public sector universities eager to join in the high status game.

Yet, it is difficult to name an American university, whether it is Harvard or Virginia or Chicago or my own Berkeley, that is structurally unique. With a few exceptions, even the most famous liberal arts colleges resemble one another. They have similar teaching formats, reward structures and career aspirations, and these are taken from the research-led universities. This is not surprising since those who

teach in liberal arts colleges possess advanced degrees from precisely those universities. The University of California with its ten campuses may be thought of as structurally unique; but the separate campuses are more identical than different, especially as the Santa Cruz experiment did not, as once hoped, quite succeed in establishing an Oxford or Cambridge on the Pacific Coast. And whatever internal campus partitioning may exist – honours or disciplinary colleges, professional schools, research institutions, laboratories, programmes and centres – the whole is systemically held together by a central administration, whose authority is sometimes mediated by the power of faculty exit (depending upon markets) and the grantsmanship of researchers.

Oxford certainly has much of this familiar configuration, but it has more. It has teaching colleges (with one exception). The organising theme of the book is consequently collegiality, the past and present meanings of values and procedures derived from the accidents of history. The two authors have also written a companion and broader comparative book on that subject appearing in 2010 under the title *The Collegial Tradition in the Age of Mass Higher Education*. Collegiality is a word much favoured by academics, whether or not the institution in which they find themselves has a network of distinct colleges orbiting around a central administrative system that has varied in function, resources and importance over the centuries. The word 'collegiality' is appealing. For most academics anywhere it implies a society – the original Latin meaning of 'collegium' – joint decision-making, a fellowship, a guild, a profession, whose members, acting in concert, have more or less full control over their common activities. That is the ideal, but its reality varies radically as Tapper and Palfreyman are at pains to explain. Even though American colleges and universities have strong central administrations, the collegial ideal is also there to be found, to be invoked against what are taken to be intrusions into core teaching and knowledge-generating activities. Today that takes the form, in Britain and America and doubtless elsewhere in Europe, of a denunciation of 'managerialism' in all of its internal and external formulations.

Collegiality possesses a fuller range of meanings in the Oxford environment. It encompasses ideas about teaching, examining and research, about policy-making with respect to finances and maintenance of the college fabric and about career directions. It includes commensality, the act of breaking bread together – in all societies the sign of a superior sociability and generosity, raised to high art in the rituals of hall. Each of these aspects of Oxford's history receives very close scrutiny from the authors whose pursuit of both micro- and macro-changes is relentless. The general object is to determine whether such changes collectively alter the inherited character of Oxford, in which case it ceases to be unique, or whether in fact, despite radical pressures from outside, a special heritage is preserved, indeed, even strengthened. The issue is subtle. The evidence appears to favour the latter conclusion, but it is the process of discussion and argument that is perhaps the most absorbing, especially because the greater the amount of internal differentiation, the greater will be the number of issues in need of resolution. And that is one reason why Oxford provides a case study from which observers may profit even if circumstances are different.

The dons have worked hard at preserving their heritage even though arriving at agreement is never smooth. Differences of opinion have sometimes been bitter. But special efforts are required. Survival of the college system at Oxford relies upon activity that often has nothing to do with personal standing in a given specialty. So that is a problem where teaching receives less global recognition than research specialisation, and the authors address it.

But let us now also recognise that Oxford has help. Elite institutions possess advantages denied to other kinds of higher education institutions. They usually have history on their side, meaning a splendid architectural fabric, accumulated resources (never enough) and a loyal alumni, often with means. Close relations with political and social leaders are an additional assist, if not foolproof. Amongst the greatest assets of celebrity institutions is the ability to draw from a pool of the ablest available students. Top students in turn attract teaching talent, but would they appear quite so talented if their students were not so clever? The necessary expansion of higher education opportunities in the twentieth century has produced something like a bimodal distribution of student achievement. Institutions that were always in some sense select have become meritocratic as the best secondary school graduates compete for entrance. That leaves the less favoured institutions. Many of them are of more recent origin. Their intake includes large numbers requiring remedial instruction where the challenges of teaching are indeed significant. Before the advent of mass access higher education in Britain, remediation was the American disease. It is now everyone's academic disease.

The ability to attract superior students is a huge advantage for Oxford, for Imperial, for Princeton, for Stanford, for Amherst and Williams colleges and, in a far more complicated way, for campuses of the University of California where the undergraduate population is of mixed achievement but postgraduate quality is strong. A debate is now commencing at Berkeley on whether a significant amount of undergraduate instruction ought to be offered on-line. Such a move, for which political and financial pressures are building, would surely alter historical relationships and connections. I see no challenge of this magnitude in the case of Oxford.

Critics have always accused Oxford, and other privileged universities, of resisting change. Those who make the charges (often from their own agenda) have not studied history. They certainly ought to read this book. Universities are always changing, although the pace of change is not uniform or predictable. Those who see universities as always conservative do not grasp the imperatives of intellectual discovery, which are continuous even when quiet. Those who argue, using Darwinian language, that universities must always 'adapt' do not understand that cultural and institutional life is not primarily survival. Adaptation is a complicated response to circumstances involving traditions whose absence impoverishes everyday life. Traditions provide the enchantments missing in a humdrum world. They also provide continuity, and the acquisition and transmission of learning in particular do not occur overnight. Traditions also furnish benchmarks against which departures can be measured. If there is to be a destination, as the Oxford don A.H. Halsey remarks, there must be an origin.

These observations are not meant as apologies. In the long history of universities there have been dreadful moments, from the willingness of professors to support authoritarian governments and religious exclusion to anti-semitism, discrimination against women (Oxford much less so than Cambridge) and social snobbery. Academics in brand-name universities have also often failed to recognise the important contributions of less favoured institutions. Worst of all has been the timidity of academics in facing up to the brutalities of twentieth-century totalitarian governments. It remains to be seen whether the current educational ambitions of non-western governments will surmount these tendencies. Another difficulty is a consequence of ideological and political partisanship that has raised concerns about intellectual honesty, value-free knowledge and the degree to which taxpayers can trust the members of their higher education communities. The fabrication of research results and plagiarism are particular temptations in the age of the Internet and market discipline.

All national higher education systems are currently encountering financial difficulties, intensifying problems arising from plentiful other sources. Oxford's college system is particularly expensive. Nevertheless, this second edition, besides incorporating a large amount of new material and updating earlier conclusions, is more optimistic than the edition of a decade ago. The changed title reflects the mood. While the earlier version featured the 'decline of the collegiate tradition', the revised one focuses on 'conflict, consensus and continuity'. What has been learned is this: despite the gloom to which academic monks are periodically prone, Oxford has risen to the occasion and intensely studied itself with profit. Thanks to Tapper and Palfreyman, the rest of us are now the fortunate beneficiaries of an enlarged understanding of how the academic controversies of a new millennium can be negotiated.

University of California
Berkeley, CA

Sheldon Rothblatt

Preface

This is the second edition of our *Oxford and the Decline of the Collegiate Tradition*, which was published in 2000. The new title reflects both more optimism about the process of change in the collegiate universities and our stronger belief in the merits of collegial governance. This second edition has been revised to reflect the changes that have taken place both in the University of Oxford and in British higher education over the past decade. Several chapters have been rewritten in depth and one new chapter, which presents a map of the colleges and an overview of the University's academic character, has been included. This edition, therefore, places the collegiate tradition more firmly within context. As such it represents a contemporary overview of the collegiate university as seen through the evolving prism of its most distinctive characteristic – its collegial tradition.

Many would argue that the current model of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge took shape in the latter half of the nineteenth century and ever since has been reformed steadily. But those nineteenth century reforms restructured practices that were centuries old. Did the nineteenth century betray the past? Is the contemporary process of change jeopardising a sacrosanct idea of the university? Or, as this book argues, do institutions have to adapt their pasts if they are to continue to thrive? Perhaps the ultimate challenge for institutions is how to adapt successfully without appearing to change radically.

But, with particular reference to Oxford, contemporary developments have shown a deep-seated commitment within the University to some of the established ingredients of collegiality – the resistance to the creation of a Council in which lay membership predominates, the continuing advocacy of tutorial teaching, vibrant defence against the widespread attack on college control of undergraduate admissions in the wake of the 'Laura Spence' fracas and the continuing fact that colleges – thank goodness – occasionally still portray their idiosyncratic characters. Moreover, this has occurred as many of the world-class league tables continue to place the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge at the top end of the totem pole.

Although it is not a central theme, there is a comparative dimension to this book that recognises important differences in the interpretation of the collegial tradition between the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Furthermore, in the conclusion we explore the idea that their respective interpretations of collegiality are converging, with Oxford moving towards Cambridge. However, in terms of our wider

writing a more significant reference point is our broadly based book on collegiality, *The Collegial Tradition in the Age of Mass Higher Education*, which was published by Springer in 2010. This book complements that earlier volume by examining the contemporary challenges facing the collegial tradition within the context of arguably the most pristine model of the collegiate university, the University of Oxford. In essence it is a case study of collegiality in action in its strongest and broadest form. The earlier volume explores the argument that the collegial tradition is embedded in the very idea of the university and, although in its Oxbridge context it may find a particularly powerful representation, it has penetrated the general understanding of what is meant by the university. The two volumes, therefore, complement one another.

Chapters 1 to 3 examine the idea of collegiality, the form it took at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and the reasons it survived at those two places but disappeared elsewhere. It is part of our argument that Oxford and Cambridge have always been collegiate universities, and while aspects of their collegiality have been replicated elsewhere, the collegial tradition in its most pristine form emerged in the latter half of nineteenth century England. The two universities were responding, albeit reluctantly, to increasing government intervention in their affairs stimulated by the political pressures exerted by an ever more forceful professional class. The collegial tradition developed as Oxford and Cambridge shed the functions they performed for the established church and became universities serving the wider society. This was the revolution of the dons; clergymen became dons and donnish dominion reigned supreme (Engel, 1983; Rothblatt, 1968). Thus the emergence in different forms of the collegial tradition was a response to broad societal change embracing, besides the ancient universities, the leading public schools, the army, civil service, local government and indeed the London livery companies.

It is evident that the collegial tradition has never been a static entity; indeed, traditions that survive must be responsive to the changing needs of society. Immediately the question is raised as to whether key educational ideas – such as the collegial tradition, university autonomy or a liberal education – have any integral meaning or whether they are infinitely malleable? Therefore, our second major concern is to look directly at the question of continuity and change within the collegial tradition. But this is not a new concern. In the very throes of its nineteenth century reconstruction, Oxford was facing serious challenges to incorporate both the experimental sciences and women: a male construct centred around teaching and scholarship within arts was under pressure to include women and the sciences, that is to broaden its base both socially and intellectually. The question was, and indeed still is, could the collegial tradition respond to these pressures in a manner that would enable it to retain its essential characteristics while meeting new demands? Moreover, the collegial tradition has had to marry external pressures with the career interests of its own academic labour force. In the latter half of the nineteenth century it succeeded, but whether it can continue to do so in the twenty-first century is more problematic.

Chapters 4 to 8 analyse the responses of the University of Oxford to the contemporary challenges it faces and its ensuing patterns of adjustment. It will follow

the pattern of change in relation to a number of critical issues: collegiality as a sociocultural experience (commensality), control of undergraduate admissions, the tutorial system, the self-governing community of scholars and the pattern of financial resources. However, collegiality – certainly with respect to how HEIs are governed – is under attack on a broad front, including in 'the new universities', which emerged as a consequence of the Further and Higher Education Act, 1992 (Ryder, 1996; Warren, 1994, 1997). Therefore, aspects of this wider attack will be analysed: an attack that according to international surveys has left British academics amongst the most demoralised in the world (Altbach, 1997, p. 333).

The precise manifestations of the collegial tradition have been considered only rarely and we are interested to see in what ways our definition will be embellished and challenged. What appears is a robust tradition, one that has been able to reformulate itself while retaining a recognisable form and one that has (so far) blended continuity with change. The Victorian tutor-don has become 'research active' but the tutorial system continues; graduate students appear en masse but most of the colleges are still dominated by the traditional 18- to 21-year-old undergraduate intake. 'Big science' evolves in its enclave of specialist buildings but the scientists still have college rooms and many lunch regularly with their arts colleagues. The college library is computerised, the internet reaches student bedrooms that are steadily *en suited* and centrally heated, and although the college gates may slam shut at midnight students no longer climb over walls to get back in since they now have 'swipe' cards. The JCR Pantry and the Hall Buttery still sell port and wine but the students may prefer fruit-flavoured bottled lager, all purchased on the basis of electronic 'cashless vending'. While many students still row and play rugger, others will enjoy such contemporary activities as bungee-jumping and para-gliding. The Old Members (alumni) return for the Gaude to wallow in nostalgia but are pursued professionally by the Development Officer for their donations and legacies and the same Old Members may well attend the Carol Service in a timeless Chapel now lit by fibre-optic cabling, the Bursar is still called the Bursar (rather than the Chief Financial Officer or the Finance Director) although he may have an MBA, the Porter's Lodge may have CCTV monitors but is not labelled Security Control. And so it has gone on – changing but seemingly immutable.

In the final chapter and postscript we turn to the future. As we were writing the first edition Oxford and its colleges were attempting to come to terms with the latest attempt at internal reform in the shape of the North Report (University of Oxford, 1997a). Subsequently, there were the troubled years of the vice chancellorship of John Hood as he tried to reform (others would say, undermine) the University's structure of governance. The colleges have faced both a whittling of their fee income and the fact that public funding is now channelled to them through the University. The authority of the University in relation to the colleges has been augmented in recent years, thanks to the government-imposed accountability regime, the pressure exerted by the widening participation agenda, the channelling of core research income through the mechanism of the research assessment exercises and most recently the sanctioning of variable fees. The collegiate university continues as a federal model of governance but, in view of these developments, perhaps the

balance of power within the model – between colleges and university – has now shifted so far in favour of the latter that federalism increasingly exists in name only.

To a limited extent we also examine the future governance of higher education in Britain more generally, an interest that has been pursued with an international viewpoint in our *The Collegial Tradition in the Age of Mass Higher Education*. Is the drive towards managerialism so strong that those dimensions of collegiality, which have penetrated British higher education, are now in terminal decline? Is it possible that the state, within a diversified model of mass higher education, will actually permit – even encourage – collegiality? Can high-quality teaching and research be delivered without being organised collegially? Will collegiality, perhaps conceived of in different ways, thrive at the grassroots of HEIs? Alternatively, is 'a nightmare scenario' unfolding? Are we witnessing the disappearance of autonomous colleges at both Oxford and Cambridge through amalgamations and bankruptcies as the Listed Buildings are converted into halls of residence? Is this linked to greatly enhanced central authority being located in the two Universities, while these two former collegiate institutions find themselves embedded within a wider system of higher education in which the state and the market reward those who can most cheaply (efficiently!) deliver a national curriculum degree course and enhance their league-table positions in the research assessment exercises?

Contemporarily the problems of successful adjustment to changing circumstances are intensified by a strong measure of continuing financial dependence upon a state, which, with alternative models at its disposal, appears to have become increasingly unsympathetic both to Oxbridge's exceptionalism and to the manifestations of collegiality within the system of higher education at large. Furthermore, within the context of the current fiscal crisis facing the state, it is to be expected (regardless of the political persuasion of the next government) that public expenditure on higher education will be curtailed (with cuts of the order of those imposed in the early 1980s, some 15% spread over 3 years). Within this context university funding is likely to become increasingly dependent upon the market – with, in due course, higher student fees assuming a significantly enhanced input. It is difficult to predict the precise ramifications of such a development for the long-term welfare of the collegiate universities. Does the collegial tradition become too expensive to sustain? Or, does it give the collegiate universities a distinctive cutting-edge in the market? And, if so, how will the colleges respond to the challenge of attracting academic talent and potential as well as ensuring that prospective students can afford to pay the fees?

Besides the University's own reports, we absorb into our interpretation of the restructuring of the collegial tradition several contemporary perspectives on Oxford: the modernisation thesis (Soares, 1999); a model of governance still dominated by collegial interests (Halsey, 1995, pp. 149–174); and how Oxford could be improved (Kenny and Kenny, 2007). This, therefore, is a book with the usual scholarly pretensions, which we see as offering a serious in-depth discussion of the idea of the collegial tradition in action. The intention is to encourage the reader both to interpret the histories of the two ancient English Universities in a reflective manner and to understand more fully the role of ideas in the process of educational change. By

drawing attention to the collegial tradition we hope to have thrown a sharper light upon the current restructuring of the British system of higher education – to make us more aware of what we are in danger of losing. One of the authors is a full-time college official while the other is a retired academic and, consequently, we have different relationships to the current changes in higher education. Not surprisingly, that has been reflected in our contributions to this book. But we have a common commitment to ensuring that the best emerges, in terms of both academic understanding and institutional change. This is a book written to appeal to the educated citizenry at large and, above all, to those – like ourselves – who have been both seduced and infuriated by the magic of Oxbridge.

Oxford, UK

Ted Tapper
David Palfreyman

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge with thanks the time given by those Oxford insiders whom we interviewed for this book. They are listed in the Appendix.

Ted Tapper is grateful to his daughter, Jean Briden, for her editorial assistance. We both owe a debt of gratitude to Kate Hunter, the Bursar's Secretary at New College, Oxford, for her skill and patience in typing parts of the manuscript and for facilitating smooth communication between us.

As authors, we take full responsibility for all errors, omissions, interpretations and the prognosis offered in the Postscript.

Contents

Chapter 1
Setting the Context: Oxford's Changing Academic and Social Demography

> *But in England there has been an additional special factor – the historical existence and influence of the Oxford and Cambridge colleges. In both these universities it would be no outrage to assert that there has been, at least until recently, no university.*
> (A. H. Halsey, 1995)

Introduction

This book complements our *Collegial Tradition in the Age of Mass Higher Education* (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010). It presents an interpretation of how the collegial tradition has evolved, and is still evolving, within the University of Oxford, which – arguably – is but one of only two collegiate universities in today's world of higher education. The University of Cambridge offers the other, and somewhat different, model of the collegiate university. This volume parallels its first edition in the sense that it looks at the University of Oxford through a particular prism rather than presenting an in-depth broader overview of the contemporary university. In this book the collegiate university finds both its natural home and fullest expression within the University of Oxford.

The collegial tradition evolves within the context of its institutional setting, which in recent decades has been reshaped in response to both internally generated and externally imposed pressures. There is the possibility of constructing the idea of collegiality as an ideal-type but in the real world collegiality is reified in different forms within varying settings. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to present part of the context within which Oxford's interpretation of the collegial tradition has been formed. It will outline with a broad-brush overview the University's social and academic demography. It offers not so much a contemporary map of the University but rather highlights landmarks that one would undoubtedly find on such a map. This is the skeleton around which collegiality is built. Subsequently, the book will add flesh to the skeleton by examining some of the pressures that have restructured collegiality, analysing the internal university discourse (mainly in the form of documentary evidence) that has accompanied the process of change, and presenting the

T. Tapper, D. Palfreyman, *Oxford, the Collegiate University*, Higher Education Dynamics 34, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0047-5_1,

different paths that the collegial tradition has taken over time – that is how it has worked, and is still working, in practice.

This approach could be seen as drawing upon Soares' essentially descriptive overview of the recent history of Oxford, as *The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University* (Soares, 1999). But both 'privilege' and 'modernisation' are words with strong pejorative undertones, which suggests that Oxford was once an outmoded, even fossilised, institution serving the interests of a particular class of persons but has been much improved – modernised – thanks to a protracted period of reform. This book commences with the different, but widely held view, that historically both Oxford and Cambridge personified a particular model of the university and that in many ways they have held a unique position within the British system of higher education. This uniqueness flowed out of both their relationship to the wider society and the manner in which they functioned as institutions of higher education. Whether they were privileged or not is another issue, and whether 'modernisation' has actually eroded those privileges (or simply placed them on a different – perhaps more secure – footing) is a moot point.

The proposition that there is a special character to Oxbridge is encapsulated in the title of the recent HEPI publication: *Oxford and Cambridge: How Different Are They?* (Chester & Bekhradnia, 2009). What has occurred is not so much the modernisation of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge but rather an apparent decline in their exceptional characters in comparison to other British universities. However, as HEPI's research illustrates, it is possible to modernise but still retain a special position within the pantheon of British higher education. Nonetheless, there is a further issue. What are the measures of institutional distinctiveness? Is diversity defined not so much by the embracing of different values, ends and means but rather by levels of achievement in terms of defined criteria? Thus Oxford and Cambridge may be very different from other institutions of higher education as calculated by a range of variables but very similar because they are all being evaluated by the same criteria. Thus Oxford and Cambridge may differ from other British universities without being particularly distinctive.

This chapter will present three sets of comparative data. First, it will construct a contemporary profile of the Oxford colleges. The intention is to present a snapshot of the Oxford colleges that will illustrate the range of differences within the collegial model. The implied question is whether colleges composed of markedly different defining characteristics can be said to constitute a collegiate system? The comparative dimension is dependent upon the matching of college profiles. Second, this chapter will compare the University of Oxford with other universities within the British system of higher education. The comparisons will be based upon a number of social, academic and financial criteria and will draw upon the Higher Education Policy Institute's 2009 study as well as Soares' book (1999).

With respect to the data sets it will be important to consider the question of change over time. Is Oxford's collegiate system becoming more diverse, so making it increasingly difficult to sustain a coherent identity? With regard to comparisons with other British universities the evidence provided by the selected criteria may indeed suggest that Oxford is unique. However, these distinctive hallmarks may be

considerably more muted than they used to be (a consideration that is rather overlooked in the HEPI study). Hence, not only are there common comparative reference points (suggesting that institutions belong to the same club) but also they are becoming more like each other with time – but not just yet a convergence indicative of the reproduction of replica watches.

The third comparative dimension is to examine Oxford's position within the so-called 'world-class league tables'. We will draw our evidence from the rankings constructed by *Times Higher Education* (formerly the *Times Higher Education Supplement*), which is both widely publicised (even if not highly regarded) and has a particular resonance for UK universities. None of the rankings are without their critics (for contrasting evaluations, see Marginson, 2006; Palfreyman & Tapper, 2009; Tapper & Filippakou, 2009; Usher & Savino, 2006) but whatever their limitations they provide a comparative reference point for universities of international standing (possibly even more so for universities that aspire to belong to that club), even if it is a status constructed from flimsy evidence. The purpose is not to offer a critique of the tables but rather to illustrate the point that it is a judgement that elite universities, however they may respond publicly, cannot easily ignore. The issue for Oxford is straightforward. Can it sustain itself as a collegiate university and still perform effectively in terms of the criteria that determine world-class status? Does its collegial tradition aid or hinder the University's performance in these terms?

At the outset it should be said that this chapter does not aim to have the depth and range of data that would make it useful as a standard reference resource. The contemporary comparisons (especially for the colleges) are easier to plot than the historical trends. Moreover, why the criteria that determine so-called world-status may be clearly defined, what enables effective competition in terms of those criteria is more difficult to discern. Consequently, not all the argument will be based on a developed body of empirical evidence, but where that is the case the necessary qualifications and equivocations will be made. The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a feel for the current academic and social demography of Oxford and to provide a context in which the changing ideas and practices of collegiality analysed in subsequent chapters can be placed. It is not, however, simply the presentation of evidence for its own sake. For example, the debate about undergraduate access to the University has been deeply influenced by the socially selective composition of Oxford's undergraduate population. In other words, social demography has been a critical ingredient in the politics of admissions policy, and so impacting sharply upon the policy-making process in this key area of collegial authority. Similarly, it is impossible to appreciate changing patterns of commensality, another important component of the collegial tradition, without some sensitivity to the social and academic milieu that embraces contemporary dons.

A Map of the Colleges

As of 1 December 2008, there were 19,545 registered students at Oxford who were members of one of the University's 45 colleges and halls (University of Oxford,

2009, 18 March, p. 807). In addition there were 785 students without college membership, of whom all but 34 were part-time students. The total student population, therefore, was 20,030 distributed amongst colleges that vary considerably in character.

Permanent Private Halls

The first distinction to make is between the colleges and the Permanent Private Halls. There are now six such Halls (Greyfriars Hall, closed in 2008 with its students transferring to Regent's Park College, and Ripon College Cuddesdon has a separate status but some of its members – 33 in 2005–2006 – were registered as Oxford students). The current Halls are as follows:

Blackfriars;
Campion;
Regent's Park;
St. Benet's;
St. Stephen's House; and
Wycliffe.

All the Halls have close religious (Christian) ties with, in some cases, a link to a specific religious order. While 'there is no single model for the governance of the Permanent Private Halls ... each has a structure that ensures a strong role for its parent Church or Order in its affairs' (University of Oxford, 2007, July, p. 5). Consequently, it means that the Halls are formally less autonomous bodies than the colleges. They are also small institutions: in 2008 only Regent's Park and Wycliffe had more than 100 students, with Campion as the smallest with a mere 9. Male students dominate, and neither Campion nor St. Benet's admits women, while Blackfriars, St. Stephen's House and Wycliffe admit only mature students (aged 21+ years). Not surprisingly, theology is the main academic focus of the Halls, and while overall the undergraduate numbers outweigh those of the postgraduates, there is nonetheless also a small postgraduate presence (a total of 83 postgraduates in the academic year 2005–2006 – University of Oxford, 2006, 18 October, p. 239).

In spite of their long association with the University, the Permanent Private Halls cannot be seen as belonging to the heartland of Oxford's network of colleges. They are tied to the University by special statutory arrangements and their academic missions have a strong professional focus with respect to both their recruitment of students and the degree courses they support. In many cases their students are preparing for careers in a religious order. Finally, although many of the Halls are ancient foundations, their formal association with the University dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century with most obtaining their licences after 1945. These are, therefore, institutions with a comparatively recent and special relationship to the University. They diversify its character rather than shape its identity.

The Graduate Colleges

Since the amalgamation of Green College and Templeton College in 2008, the University of Oxford has seven colleges with graduate status. They are as follows:

Green Templeton;
Kellogg;
Linacre;
Nuffield;
St. Anthony's;
St. Cross; and
Wolfson.

In view of the fact that historically the central academic purpose of the University of Oxford was the provision of undergraduate education, it is unsurprising that the graduate colleges are, with the exception of Nuffield College, post-1945 foundations (Nuffield was founded in 1937 but did not receive its charter until 1958). In 2005–2006 there were some 2,137 students in the graduate colleges compared to 436 students in the then Permanent Private Halls (incorporating Ripon College Cuddesdon), although this included 95 undergraduates who were members of Green College as it then was (University of Oxford, 2006, 18 October, p. 239). Therefore, in 2005–2006 the student membership of the graduate colleges constituted comfortably more than 10% of the University's total student population. In view of these numbers, it can be said that in a comparatively short period of time (at least in relation to the considerable longevity of Oxford), the graduate colleges have impacted significantly upon the identity of the University. Of course this has to be placed within the wider context of both the considerable expansion of postgraduate numbers in the colleges that traditionally catered for only undergraduates and the increasing prominence of the University's research mission within its overall academic profile.

The social demographic profiles of the individual graduate colleges, excluding Kellogg College, are not significantly different. Kellogg's distinctiveness is due to its large number of part-time mature students. The gender balance of the full-time postgraduates is relatively even throughout the graduate colleges with Nuffield College proving to be the exception (roughly one-third female and two-thirds male postgraduates in December 2008). Nuffield and Kellogg are also distinctive because their full-time student numbers are both under 100, contrasting sharply with Wolfson College at the other end of the continuum with over 500 full-time postgraduates.

There is an interesting parallel with the Permanent Private Halls in that some of the graduate colleges also embrace a limited range of academic disciplines. In the case of the Halls their close association with the Christian churches readily explains this. The Halls were founded to promote the interests of the churches (or their religious orders), which in part meant offering an education that would be considered appropriate for pursuing a religious career (and thus the attraction of theology).

Some of the graduate colleges have also skewed their academic identities, not as narrowly as the Halls, but by moving in a similar direction. And, where this has not occurred, it raises interesting questions as to how best to interpret the college's identity.

Green Templeton, Kellogg, Nuffield and St. Antony's have purposefully constructed reasonably confined academic profiles. The following short abstracts from the college websites will serve to make the point:

> 'It [Green Templeton] specialises in subjects relating to human welfare and social, economic, and environmental well-being, including medical sciences, management and most social sciences'.
>
> (Green Templeton, 2010, 25 February)

> It [Kellogg College] was established as a graduate college with the aim of supporting the lifelong learning work of the University and the expansion of opportunities for the continuing education and professional development of mature and non-traditional students . . . The College has close connections with the University Department for Continuing Education, the Department of Education and other departments active in areas of professional and part-time study.
>
> (Kellogg, 2010, 25 February)

> Nuffield is a graduate college of the University of Oxford specialising in the Social Sciences, particularly Economics, Politics and Sociology'.
>
> (Nuffield, 2010, 25 February)

> St. Antony's College is the most cosmopolitan of the seven graduate colleges of the University of Oxford, specialising in international relations, economics, and politics and history of particular parts of the world.
> (the website then goes on to list its 'Area Studies Centres'; St. Antony's, 2010, 25 February)

By way of contrast, Linacre, St. Cross and Wolfson (which, except for St. Antony's, have much larger student numbers than the other graduate colleges) make a point of stressing the academic diversity of their students as well as their cosmopolitan social make-ups: 'our diverse student body has a wide spread of disciplines and nationalities' (Wolfson, 2010, 25 February); 'the college reflects Thomas Linacre's breadth of learning in its own multi-disciplinary purpose and ideals' (Linacre, 2010,25 February), and 'The College [St. Cross] offers a unique interdisciplinary environment, spanning and integrating the arts and sciences, to scholars from all nations' (St. Cross, 2010, 25 February). Unsurprisingly, all Oxford colleges convey the idea that living in college enhances both the cultural and social facets of what it means to be a student. Although it would be premature to make a conclusive judgement, Wolfson, Linacre and St. Cross each present an image suggesting that this is their primary purpose with the faculties and departments assuming overwhelming responsibility for the students' academic progress.

Of course with respect to graduate students it is the University that controls their admission and, for those undertaking doctoral research, is responsible for ensuring adequate supervision. However, at Nuffield College – thanks to the size of its endowment income – there is a significant wedge of faculty who hold official college fellowships (whose salaries are paid by the college) and who are actively engaged both in graduate supervision and, through their research, in enhancing the college's

academic standing. In effect the college has an academic status that is to some extent independent of the University. Amongst the graduate colleges this puts Nuffield in a unique position, and while Green Templeton, Kellogg and St. Antony's may have internationally known identities for both graduate study and research, they are much more dependent upon the University for their sustenance.

Oxford's Collegiate Heartland

While the graduate colleges have established a substantial presence in Oxford and played their part in reshaping the University's identity, without critical changes in the character of what we term the 'collegiate heartland', that is those long-established colleges devoted historically to the education of undergraduates, the graduate colleges – like the Permanent Private Halls – could be seen as mere decorations upon the traditional collegial core of the University.

Before analysing that core it is necessary to say a word about All Souls College. Its age (founded in 1438), its wealth, its status within Oxford and its links to the British establishment (political as well as academic) all help to make it a key member of the University's collegiate system. However, it sees itself primarily as '... an academic research institution with strong ties to the public domain' (All Souls College, 2010, 25 February). It is *sui generis* with no undergraduates and a mere handful of postgraduates in residence. In effect it has stood aside from the major developments that have refurbished Oxford's collegiate heartland over the past 50 years.

The collegiate heartland, as we define it, consists therefore of those colleges that have a traditional commitment to the education of undergraduates. Its composition, a total of 30 colleges, is as follows:

Balliol	Brasenose	Christ Church	Corpus Christi
Exeter	Hertford	Harris Manchester	Jesus
Keble	Lady Margaret Hall	Lincoln	Magdalen
Mansfield	Merton	New College	Oriel
Pembroke	Queen's	St. Anne's	St. Catherine's
St. Edmund Hall	St. Hilda's	St. Hugh's	St. John's
St. Peter's	Somerville	Trinity	University
Wadham	Worcester		

In terms of student numbers the colleges range in size from 190 (Harris Manchester) to 715 (St. Catherine's) and some two-thirds have more than 500 student members (University of Oxford, 2009, March 18, p. 807). There are understandable disputes about precise foundation dates but the only twentieth century foundations are St. Peter's (1929) and St. Catherine's (1963) while Manchester Harris, Keble, Lady Margaret Hall, Mansfield, St. Anne's, St. Hilda's, St. Hugh's and Somerville were founded in the nineteenth century. All the other colleges can justly claim to be venerable institutions with foundations dating back to the thirteenth century.

The most critical recent change in their social composition is that all the colleges now admit both male and female undergraduates/postgraduates. The movement towards co-education commenced in earnest in the 1970s and St. Hilda's was the last bastion to resist the entry of male students (admitting men from 2008). As of 1 December 2008, 46% of Oxford's students were female and 54% male (out of a grand total of 20,330 full- and part-time students – University of Oxford, 2009, 18 March, p. 807). Mansfield (61%) and Magdalen (60%) have the highest percentage of male students. Some of the former women's colleges still have a higher representation of female students (Lady Margaret Hall 53% and Somerville 52%) with – unsurprisingly given the bitterness of the opposition to the entry of male students and, more significantly, their very recent admission – St. Hilda's leading the way with 81% female students in 2008, which can be expected to decline rapidly.

In terms of *academic* development the steady expansion of postgraduate numbers is the most notable change. Indeed, in the academic year 2005–2006, 2,027 postgraduates were based in the graduate colleges compared to 4,143 in those colleges with both undergraduate and postgraduate student members. The balance in 2005–2006 between undergraduate and postgraduate representation in these particular colleges was 72% undergraduates and 28% postgraduates out of a total of 14,926 students (University of Oxford, 2006, 18 October, p. 239). Of course, although graduate students may be members of a college, their relationship to it can be very different from that of the undergraduates. The colleges formally admit undergraduates while the University selects postgraduates. Moreover, there is a big contrast between residing in college (which almost all undergraduates experience for at least part of their Oxford years) than using it as essentially a social base (which appears to be true for most postgraduates). Clearly, this is an area where more research is needed but, nonetheless, in spite of the equivocations, the character of the collegiate heartland has shifted, if not changed irrevocably, over time.

While the purpose of this part of the chapter has been to map out the major fault lines within the *current* collegiate model, some contrasts with the recent past are revealing. When the Franks Report appeared in 1966 there were 5 colleges that accepted only women as undergraduates and 23 that admitted only men. Indeed, it can be argued that the Commission's failure to give serious consideration to the gender composition of the colleges was its main blind spot. The Commission reported that in 1965–1966, 83% of students at Oxford were men and 17% women (with a total student population of 9,824; University of Oxford, 1996, p. 54). By the time of the North Commission the respective proportions for undergraduates were 57.4% male and 42.6% female (University of Oxford, 1997a, p. 33). Evidently, the three decades between the two reports was the period of greatest change in the University's gender balance with a much smaller increase in the proportion of female students since 1997. And, as we noted, it was a shift that enveloped the whole of the collegiate heartland.

The Franks Commission recorded that 20.7% of students at the men's colleges were postgraduates in 1964–1965 compared to 18.6% at the women's colleges (University of Oxford, 1966b, p. 30), whereas the percentage of postgraduates in the same colleges in 2005–2006 was 28% (with 37.6% in the University at large).

In fact the two sets of figures are not strictly comparable because neither Mansfield College nor Harris Manchester College was recorded in the 1964–1965 statistics (neither of them having at the time full college status), although between them they contributed only 83 postgraduates to the total number in 2005–2006. So postgraduates have a stronger relative presence within the University, with the collegiate core moving in the same direction as the wider university and contributing to the largest numerical slice of the postgraduate population. But it is noticeable that with respect to this core we are still viewing a university dedicated mainly to the teaching of undergraduates. Moreover, although individual colleges have established reputations for admitting students who study for particular degrees (with Balliol's PPE students perhaps providing the best example), most colleges will offer places to students reading for a wide range of degrees. Thus they are not like the graduate colleges and Permanent Private Halls, which tend to embrace (the large 'residential' graduate colleges excluded) a narrower range of academic disciplines. If the collegial tradition is in part about the presence of a potentially broad interdisciplinary dialogue then it is in the collegiate heartland that it will be found (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 169–170), assuming that the colleges really do function in ways that promote this interchange.

Soares has argued that the foundation, and subsequent thriving, of St. Catherine's College exemplifies the 'renewal of the collegiate tradition' (Soares, 1999, pp. 135–166). In the sense that St. Catherine's emerged out of humble institutional origins to become only the second undergraduate college to be founded in the twentieth century (St. Peter's gained full collegial status in 1961), it does indeed symbolise the strength of the collegiate tradition. However, it is dangerous to give too much weight to the importance of one addition to the collegial family. It is more meaningful to see St. Catherine's successful emergence as reflective of a wider process of change in Oxford, one that was clearly manifested in the decision to appoint the Franks Commission of Inquiry and the growing pressure from within certain colleges to renovate the admissions process including the entry of female undergraduates into the men's colleges. Thus, St. Catherine's reinforces the renewal of the collegiate tradition, but it is difficult to evaluate its precise importance in this process, and certainly if the wider collegiate heartland had resisted reform it is doubtful whether its foundation alone would have had much of a regenerative impact.

In Chapter 8 we consider in some detail the financial basis of the collegiate university. It is sufficient to record here that following the Asquith Commission, 1922, the endowment income of the colleges was taxed to augment the financial resources of the University, but based on one of the recommendations of the Franks Inquiry this tax revenue was transferred to those colleges with restricted endowment incomes. On the basis of the calculations of the Franks Commission it was estimated that the colleges making the major contributions (above £15,000 in 1964) to the sum to be redistributed would be Christ Church, Nuffield, St. John's, All Souls, Magdalen, Queen's and Merton (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 290). In 1997 the North Report stratified the colleges into 'wealth bands' ('wealthier', 'middle range', 'poorer' and 'other' – the latter composed mainly of the Permanent Private Halls), which were based on the average endowment income per student (University

of Oxford, 1997b, p. 372). The wealthier colleges (peculiarly excluding All Souls, which because of its marginal student intake would have been by far the wealthiest college using this measure) were as follows:

Balliol;
Christ Church;
Corpus Christi;
Jesus;
Lincoln;
Magdalen;
Merton;
New College;
Nuffield;
Queen's;
St. John's; and
University.

With the exception therefore of Nuffield all the wealthier colleges belong to the collegiate heartland and its membership is relatively stable over time.

There is no doubt that with further refinement of the data it would be possible to break down the collegiate core into more narrowly defined segments. Thirty colleges is rather a large core given that in total we have been analysing only 43 colleges and Halls. However, if both Nuffield (as a graduate college of recent foundation) and All Souls (with its exceptional self-created identity) are excluded from the list then the North Commission's 11 wealthier colleges can be said to constitute an inner core of colleges – by Oxford's standards relatively large institutions in terms of student numbers, co-educational but with a preponderance of male undergraduates, a membership that is composed predominantly of undergraduates but with an intake of postgraduates constituting some 25% of the total student membership, all catering for a broadly based spread of academic disciplines, and possessing an endowment income of a size that requires them under the University's regulations to contribute to the financial pool to be redistributed to the poorer colleges. However, rather than see the overall model as composed of distinctive layers or as core surrounded by differing circular bands, it is more realistic to view it as parallel overlapping columns of colleges. So, while there is differentiation, there is also overlap and a measure of fusion.

How Different Is Oxford?

There are three core problems in undertaking a comparative analysis of higher education institutions: what institutions to compare, the characteristics you will draw upon to compare them and the time period over which comparisons are to be made. All three issues emerge in the section that follows, which will draw predominantly upon two sources: Soares' *The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University* (1999) and Chester and Bekhradnia (2009) paper, *Oxford*

and Cambridge – How Different Are They? The intention is to make a very simple point: Oxford has changed quite significantly over time but it still remains a different university within the British system of higher education. But there are two important further considerations. First, is Oxford's difference now measured essentially in terms of a common set of criteria that binds all British universities into a system of higher education? Or, is it (rather like All Souls' within Oxford) a unique university (perhaps along with Cambridge)? And, if so, what is the essence of this uniqueness? Second, what does this mean for our subsequent analysis of Oxford's collegial tradition? Is Oxford facing challenges that eventually will erode its identity beyond recognition? Or can the collegial tradition be sustained in a manner that prolongs the University's exceptional character?

Soares' 'decline of privilege and modernisation' theme is built on three main empirical strands: changes in the pattern of undergraduate admissions, the University's movement into the natural sciences and the renewal of the collegiate system, thanks to the foundation of St. Catherine's College (for our discussion of the latter, see p. 9). His chapter on undergraduate admissions follows the well-trodden path of analysing the distinctive social make-up of Oxford's undergraduate population (with school and class as the major targets but surprisingly little on the gender composition of the university except to note Franks Commission's lacunae in this respect). Thus Oxford has become a university for the middle classes with a significant presence (approximately 50%) of state school pupils. This was taking place as science secured a greater presence in the University while the number of arts students declined, and social studies remained relatively stable with around 20% of undergraduate students between 1938 and 1991 (Soares, 1999, p. 112).

However, making a range of comparisons, HEPI's research shows how Oxford and Cambridge continue to remain quite distinctive universities, and not simply by comparison with the British system of higher education at large but also with respect to other leading members of the Russell Group (in particular Imperial College London, the London School of Economics and University College London). Their evidence demonstrates that they continue to attract the largest slice of well-qualified applicants ('. . . it does appear that the students who go to Oxford and Cambridge really are exceptionally able, at least as measured by prior qualifications' – Chester & Bekhradnia, 2009, para 16). What we have witnessed is a shift towards selection by so-called meritocratic criteria, and in these terms the undergraduate entry into Oxford remains distinctive. Social biases in the selection process continue even in relation to the other Russell Group universities (the over-representation of students from the private sector of schooling and the under-representation of those from working-class families). However, those biases are mediated by the academic criteria that drive selection, and if the other Russell Group universities were as academically as selective, then almost certainly they would show the same social biases. But the fact remains that:

> Thus whilst 19.6% of full-time undergraduate entrants to all Russell Group Universities in 2007–8 came from lower socio-economic groups, only 11.0% of the entrants to Oxford and Cambridge were from these groups. Similarly, whilst not much more than half the

> entrants to Oxford and Cambridge in this year were from state schools (57.0%), around three quarters (75.7%) of the Russell Group entrants as a whole were from the maintained sector.
>
> (Chester & Bekhradnia, 2009, para 30)

Hence, the social composition of Oxford's undergraduate population has changed, but it still remains very distinctive. Interestingly, like Soares' book the HEPI paper makes little play of the most significant social development – the breaking of the gender mould in both the former women's and men's undergraduate colleges.

In view of the fact that central to the university mission is still the delivery of educational goals, it is disappointing that Chester and Bekhrandnia, with a focus that is overwhelmingly directed at inputs and outputs, made no attempt to discuss the distinctiveness, or otherwise, of Oxbridge's *academic* development. In contrast, Soares presents data to demonstrate that by 1973 the representation of Oxford undergraduates in the natural sciences was slighter higher than the figure for the British university system as a whole. Nonetheless, although the comparative gap for medical students had shrunk considerably during the same time period it was still noticeable in 1973, while in terms of students studying a technological discipline the divide remained constant throughout the period, 1922–1973, under observation (Soares, 1999, p. 120).

This is therefore one of those examples in which a selective focus upon a specific data trend could be used to create the impression of a more general trend. The natural sciences, the applied sciences and medical studies may have expanded at Oxford to lessen its academic distinctiveness but until 1973 it still remained a university in which the arts and the social sciences were heavily represented. And thereafter the sharpest distinction between Oxford's undergraduate disciplinary profile and that for all other universities has been in terms of the arts (Oxford over-representation) and technology (almost as marked Oxford under-representation; Tapper & Salter, 1992, p. 139). It is justified, therefore, to claim that to focus upon the expansion of the natural sciences at Oxford, rather than to plot trends in the broader disciplinary profile, exaggerates the extent to which the intellectual focus of Oxford has changed. But this is not to deny the general convergence of the disciplinary profiles of British universities, but rather to stress – as one would expect – Oxford's profile still remains somewhat distinctive. Interestingly, (and excluding a small number of part-time students) as of 1 December 2008, the largest number of Oxford undergraduates was in the 'humanities' – 4,125 out of a total of 11,332, or 36.4% – with the largest number of postgraduates in the 'social sciences' – 2,813 out of a total of 7,175, or 39.2% (University of Oxford, 2009, 18 March, p. 806). The parallel national figures were 144,410 undergraduate students (11.4%) in the 'humanities' (languages/history and philosophy/creative arts) and 99,525 postgraduates (37.1%) in the social sciences (social studies, law, business studies and mass communications) (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2008–2009, Table 2e). Therefore,

comparatively speaking, Oxford still remains an arts university at the undergraduate level.

The full range of Chester and Bekhradnia's comparisons of Oxford and Cambridge with selected other Russell Group universities is as follows:

1. student ability (as measured by pre-university academic qualifications);
2. student assessment of the quality of teaching they receive;
3. student academic workloads;
4. student degree classifications;
5. the access of students to high-status professional occupations;
6. the social make-up of their student bodies;
7. quality of research output;
8. levels of public resources for teaching and research; and
9. endowment and philanthropic income, as well as the financial input of the their respective presses.

And the overall conclusion is '... that Oxford and Cambridge are significantly and qualitatively different from their peer institutions' (Chester & Bekhradnia, 2009, para 69). In accounting for the comparative excellence of the two universities the paper then arrives at its final, and long-telegraphed, conclusion: 'The resources that Oxford and Cambridge enjoy are substantially greater than any other institution in the United Kingdom, and without doubt it is this fact above all that has enabled them to stand out as exceptional universities in the UK and Europe, but also, on most measures, in the world' (Chester & Bekhradnia, 2009, para 77).

Chester and Bekhradnia's final conclusion may be correct, although they present no evidence to substantiate it. Moreover, it is an easy conclusion to arrive at and one that conveniently panders to all the deeply entrenched prejudices that Oxbridge evokes. It would be absurd not to recognise the potential importance of resource allocation in securing institutional excellence. If you analyse the Oxbridge colleges it would not be too difficult to show the link between their endowment incomes and their reputations, almost regardless of the measures you employed. However, for financial resources to have an impact upon outcomes they have to be employed effectively within a context that enhances success. It is a more sophisticated approach, therefore, to tease out what makes for the effective employment of resources, rather than limit the analysis solely to differential resource inputs (see Chapter 7 for a more in-depth analysis of Oxford's financial status).

Using this approach, outcomes result from the interaction of variables and are not the consequence of one measurable input. There are qualities that are arguably intrinsic to Oxbridge and are as much responsible for their success as additional income. Oxbridge has an entrenched reputation, which influences deeply how it is perceived (both negative and positive perceptions). However, it is not only a

question of how outsiders view the two universities but also how they view themselves. The expectation is that if you join an elite university you are going to be (or will continue to be) a top performer. There is the institutional reputation to sustain and it is your task to make sure this is accomplished. Second, there is also the collegiate model of the university with its in-built tradition of grassroots involvement, co-operation through collegiality and intense internal competition. It may be that comparatively small and co-operatively run collectives produce better academic outcomes than large bureaucratically structured and managerially driven universities. Third, it should be noted that much of the additional state financial input into Oxbridge is earned income (e.g. additional resources accruing through research output) and, more importantly, there is a considerable institutionally generated input (e.g. endowment income) that goes into supporting the teaching agenda. Moreover, the college fee income has been cut substantially over the past 10 years and in part is composed of segments (e.g. the support for historic buildings) that benefit other universities. While it can be fairly argued that financial advantages in public funding were the consequence of in-built historical variables, they have also flowed out of the fact the collegiate structure appears to generate a loyalty that encourages past students to support their former colleges.

Oxford, therefore, does have an evolving academic map and there is a measure of convergence between its profile and what prevails in most other British universities. The charge is that Soares overstates his case and in doing so unfortunately uses language – 'modernisation' and 'privilege' – which introduces an unnecessarily normative tinge to the analysis. Chester and Bekhradnia are correct to bring to our attention the continuing differences of the Oxbridge model in comparison to the rest of British higher education. But they fail to see both the measure of convergence that has occurred and the fact that evaluation of performance in terms of common criteria in fact diminishes Oxbridge's distinctiveness. More importantly, they make a simple-minded assertion to account for Oxbridge's continuing difference and fail to recognise what remains distinctive about Oxbridge may be of greater importance in accounting for its continuing excellence.

The League Tables

It is important to re-emphasise that our intention is not to evaluate the tables – either by analysing their methodology or by presenting an assessment of their broader ramifications. The argument is that the steady proliferation of 'world university rankings' places a particular pressure on those universities that already belong to the elite club (by reputation and past rankings) or those that aspire to belong. As much as they may be scorned, only the most supremely confident (or foolish) of these universities can afford to ignore them entirely. The issue is what pressure do the rankings place on institutional behaviour and, for Oxford in particular, in what ways they are likely to impact upon its collegial tradition?

The Times Higher Education's top 10 rankings for the 5-year period (2005–2009) were as follows:

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Harvard	Harvard	Harvard	Harvard	Harvard
MIT	Cambridge	Cambridge[a]	Yale	Cambridge
Cambridge	Oxford	Oxford[a]	Cambridge	Yale
Oxford	MIT[a]	Yale[a]	Oxford	UCL
Stanford	Yale[a]	Imperial	Cal Tech	Imperial[a]
UC Berkeley	Stanford	Princeton	Imperial	Oxford[a]
Yale	Cal Tech	Cal Tech[a]	UCL	Chicago
Cal Tech	UC Berkeley	Chicago[a]	Chicago	Princeton
Princeton	Imperial	UCL	MIT	MIT
Ecole Polytech.	Princeton	MIT	Columbia	Cal Tech

Source: Times Higher Education, World University Rankings (2006, 6 October; 2007, 9 November; 2009, 8 October).

Cal Tech, California Institute of Technology; Ecole Polytech., Ecole Polytechnique; Imperial, Imperial College London; MIT, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; UCL, University College London.

[a]Joint rankings.

So throughout this period we see the University of Oxford placed comfortably towards the top end of the rankings. What impact, if any, this has upon the University's behaviour will depend upon how the rankings are viewed within Oxford. With respect to the national research assessments exercises (in which Oxford ranks equally highly) the returns are very concrete – a share of the core public funding that the government, via the funding councils, allocates for research support. With the world university rankings the rewards are status and prestige, while the research assessment exercises lead to critical financial returns. However, given the part that research output plays in determining league table placements, the rankings are essentially a reflection of comparative research excellence (although the methodology by which this is determined has been strongly challenged).

The implications for the collegial tradition are potentially very significant. All other things being equal, the importance of undergraduate teaching – for both university and the individual academic – declines. Moreover, does the University tailor its academic development to foster research areas that are considered to be successful, while certain departments are left to wither on the vine – or amalgamated or even closed? How do colleges adapt to these circumstances? Do they become more firmly managed institutions with a stronger leadership cadre as the commitment of their fellows becomes weaker over time? How will the University respond should Oxford's position in the next world ranking table decline from equal fifth to (say) tenth? Is there a possible impact upon the flow of endowment income into the University? Will market resources start to move away from universities with declining rankings? Will universities seek collaboration with only their peers, which may mean shunning past partners?

These are questions to which there are no easy answers, but there are some ominous signs for British universities, and Oxford in particular. The drive of several countries to ensure that they have some universities with high rankings is intense (Cheng, Wang, & Pan, 2009; Kehm & Pasternack, 2009; Kitagawa, 2009). Oxford (like Cambridge) has a much larger wedge of undergraduates than most of the Ivy League universities that dominate the ranking, and – arguably – values undergraduate teaching more highly. Furthermore, the Ivy League universities have endowments that dwarf those of both Oxford and Cambridge. Finally (and in this respect Oxford is also disadvantaged in relation to Cambridge), universities are more likely to secure a high ranking if they have strong profiles across the scientific and medical disciplines, and in these terms Oxford is weaker than many of the other current so-called world-class universities. (Oxford has a very strong research record in both science and medicine but in relative terms it is still an arts university). Is Oxford's standing in this respect likely to decline steadily over time? And, if so, what will be the University's response?

Conclusion

This chapter, along with the next chapter, provides a setting for the rest of the book. Whereas the second chapter presents a broad-ranging overview of how the collegial tradition, with particular reference to Oxford, has been debated, this chapter has outlined in broad terms aspects of the changing social and academic character of the University. Our subsequent interpretation of the collegial tradition in a variety of particular Oxford settings – for example teaching, admissions and commensality – has to be viewed in relation to both the legacy of an entrenched idea (the pressure of the past) and the changing socio-academic shape of the university (the pressure of the present).

We return, therefore, to both these chapters as the book unfolds. To present but one illustration, the analysis of undergraduate admissions incorporates the idea that collegial institutions have control of their membership and thus selecting junior members (undergraduates) is the responsibility of the colleges. But at the same time selection inevitably will come under public scrutiny, raising questions about who controls the process, how that control is exercised and its outcomes with respect to the social and academic character of those who are selected. At all levels (institutional control, procedures and outcomes) the system will be scrutinised (an Oxford education is a valued scarce resource) and possibly under pressure to change especially if the outcomes are considered to be politically unacceptable. So institutional demography has a political impact and the political impact can shape demography.

Most of the focus in this chapter has been upon the colleges: the different segments of the collegial system, its changing social and academic character and the distinctive academic characteristics of some of the individual colleges. The main developments are stark: the almost equal representation of women in the student population, the expansion of graduate student numbers and the founding of new graduate colleges. The character of the colleges is such that it is perhaps more

appropriate to describe Oxford as a network of colleges rather than as a collegiate system given the connotations of co-ordination and control that implies. Again this is an issue to which we will return when we come to analyse the governance of the University. Does inter-collegiality successfully harmonise the different elements? Is there a smooth and productive interaction of the interests of the colleges and of the University?

With respect to the University there are radically contrasting perspectives of its development – those who insist that it is still a unique institution that stands outside the British mould, while others argue that it has undergone a process of modernisation that has embedded it more tightly into the wider British system of higher education. In our analysis neither perspective is wholly true or wholly false. In terms of its academic profile it has moved closer to the national norm within the context of a wider process of convergence. But in comparative terms it continues to favour the arts and still shows an under-representation of students in technology. But while the academic profiles may be less distinctive, in terms of the variables that make up its profile Oxford continues to be different. But whether these are differences that mark Oxford as a distinctive university is an interesting question. We have argued the contrary, as these are measures in terms of which every university competes; it is just that Oxford is in a position to compete more successfully. With respect to these measures, rather than being distinctive, Oxford is both more successful and consequently different. Oxford's real distinctiveness is based on its collegial tradition, the fact that it is a collegiate university.

We have to consider in what ways these changes in the academic profile of the University impact upon the collegial tradition. Does the environment for collegiality become less sympathetic if there is a relative shift in the balance of arts undergraduates compared to postgraduate numbers in the applied sciences? How seriously do the colleges that still cater mainly for undergraduates attempt to incorporate their postgraduate members in the life of the college? Or do the science postgraduates find a different, and for them more important, collegial environment in their laboratories? What happens to the governance and administration of colleges and university if the academics have neither the time nor the interest to become engaged?

The rise of the league tables, perhaps above all the publicity they generate, simply reinforces these questions. In Oxford the collegial tradition took root in a very particular, indeed peculiar, institutional setting. It may have a long-established international reputation but that was created and sustained on its own terms. The league tables are increasingly constructed on the basis of variables that command universal recognition and not much weight, if any, is given to the quality of undergraduate teaching. And yet, as we will analyse, perhaps Oxford's most distinctive contribution to higher education has been its commitment to tutorial teaching, which is also central to its understanding of the idea of collegiality. Can the tradition be reconstructed to enable Oxford to compete globally while retaining much of what it has cherished in the past?

HEPI's analysis of the differences that persist between Oxbridge and Cambridge and other elite British universities emphasised the importance of their enhanced public financial support. It would be ridiculous not to recognise the significance of

this (even though the HEPI analysis lacks sophistication), but it is equally ridiculous to assert that this particular difference is central to explaining all of Oxbridge's advantages and achievements. We have argued for a more complex perspective on academic success, one that places resource allocation within the framework of institutional culture. Integral to Oxford is its traditional embracing of the collegial tradition. The issue is whether it can be adapted to sustain Oxford's prestige in a very different environment from the one in which its reputation took root. Or will it evaporate steadily as a new model replaces the collegiate university? Or will the future be more complex as traditional forms of collegiality retreat to the heartland of the colleges, while new forms emerge (or not emerge) within the institutions of the University? These are but some of the key issues to be addressed in this book.

Chapter 2
Collegiality Debated

For there is nothing in England to be matched with what lurks in the vapours of these meadows, and in the shadows of these spires – that mysterious, inenubilable spirit, spirit of Oxford. Oxford! The very sight of the word printed, or sound of it spoken, is fraught for me with most actual magic

(Max Beerbohm, Zuleika Dobson, 1961)

For five hundred years they [the Fellows] and their predecessors had ordained at least some portion of the elite . . . all of them imbued with a corporate complacency and an intellectual scepticism that dessicated change. . . They were the guardians of political inertia. . .

(Tom Sharpe, Porterhouse Blue, 1976)

Introduction

This chapter assists in setting the scene for the book by considering how collegiality has been debated in the Oxford context. It is not meant to be an elaborate analysis of the idea of collegiality (see Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, 17–37), but the intention for now is to present varying 'insider' interpretations of the idea of collegiality. This is followed by a short overview of how these particular perspectives can be related to the broader debate on university governance and administration. The purpose is to illustrate the sharp contrast between the normative passion of Oxford's view of itself with the cool analytical perspective that sees collegiality as but one way of conducting the affairs of a university. This chapter concludes by drawing together the varying threads within Oxford's self-perception and raises the question, to which we will return frequently, of whether this reflects current realities and presents a meaningful model for the future.

Collegiality Defined (and Just a Little History)

Our five, essentially insider, interpretations of collegiality fall under the following headings:

T. Tapper, D. Palfreyman, *Oxford, the Collegiate University*, Higher Education Dynamics 34, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0047-5_2,

(1) by mainly the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*Collegiality Defined*);
(2) in English literature, and especially within the genre of the university novel (*Collegiality in Fiction*);
(3) for Victorian Society by Cardinal Newman (*Collegiality for Newman: the Idea and the Ideal*);
(4) in recent years (*Collegiality for Contemporary Pundits*); and
(5) by the Oxford interviewees (*Collegiality for Contemporary Dons*)

The comparative perspective is located in the literature of organisational theory and management (*Collegiality as Management*), while the presentation of the key criteria that identify collegiality draws both this section to a close (*Collegiality: the Model*) and forms the conclusion of this chapter.

Oxford English Dictionary (OED)

The *OED* (1989, second edition, volume III, pp 480–483) defines college, collegial, collegiality, collegiate and the archaic colleger and collegian. The first definition of college is given as: 'An organised society of persons performing certain common functions and possessing special rights and privileges; a body of colleagues, a guild, fellowship, association . . .'. Thus, references are cited to the college of the Apostles, the college of cardinals, the college of surgeons. The fourth definition is: 'A society of scholars incorporated within, or in connection with, a University, or otherwise formed for the purposes of study or instruction', *and especially* 'An independent self-governing corporation or society (usually founded for the maintenance of poor students) in a University, as the College of the Sorbonne in the ancient University of Paris, and the ancient colleges of Oxford and Cambridge'. The fifth definition is as: 'The building or set of buildings occupied by such society or institution . . .'

Leaving aside slang definitions, and the many combinations (including 'college-pudding'!), the essence of collegiality for the purposes of this book is of an organised gathering together of individuals located within a particular building who form an independent corporate body with academic duties. What will be explored throughout this book are these aspects of communal living and working, of independence in governance, of teaching obligations and of the representation of the college both as a community of people and as a very specific purpose-designed-and-built building with features that express its unique identity.

The *OED* notes that the term 'college' as applied to Oxford was introduced only in the fourteenth century, citing the 1379 Patent Roll relating to the creation of New College and the subsequent New College Statutes of 1400. Conversely, the reference to 'collegiate' in the sense of the administrative structure of a university being arranged, as at Oxford and Cambridge (and nowhere else!) on a college system, seems to date only from the mid-nineteenth century and then to be used more widely in the mid-twentieth century, judging by the *OED* citations. A final point to note from the *OED*, also explored as a key theme in this book, is the definition of collegiality as 'Colleagueship; the relation between colleagues', and the

citing of a 1948 reference: 'Decision-taking and responsibilities were based on the "collegiality" rule. . . rather than on the "one-man management" principle . . .'. This citation seems especially apt in the context of the recent debate on the role of the vice-chancellor as chief executive who manages the modern university. Other parties in which collegiality might be found or might once have been found prior to the 1980s' search for managerial efficiency are law and accountancy partnerships, hospital consultants, the Officers' Mess, the Keepers of the Victoria and Albert Museum or the British Museum, and the Chapter of a Cathedral.

There is a further useful definition of the college in Cobban (1988, pp. 112–115), placing its origins in 'the European collegiate movement' dating back to the founding of the College of the Sorbonne within the University of Paris in c1257/58 as 'the most influential exemplar for the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge': 'In its most mature state, the secular medieval college was an autonomous, self-governing legal entity, solidly endowed, and possessing its own statutes, privileges and common seal'. Cobban stresses 'the act of endowment made for educational purposes' as complementing 'the spiritual and charitable aims underlying collegiate enterprise' – hence, for example some lay colleges are also, in accordance with the intention of their founders and their original statutes, still to this day 'choral colleges' or chantry foundations (New College, Magdalen and Christ Church at Oxford; King's at Cambridge). As Cobban puts it: 'Generally speaking, whether kings, queens, high-ranking ecclesiastics (for example, William of Wykeham, Lord Chancellor and Bishop of Winchester, founder of New College; Buxton & Williams, 1979) or statesmen, or wealthy members of the lay aristocracy, they regarded the establishment of a college as a charitable and pious venture which would enshrine their memory and which would result in a foundation in which masses would be said for their souls and for those of their relatives' (Cobban, 1988, p. 113). At the same time, however, there was also a vocational, an instrumental objective in the production of a supply of suitably educated clerics, canon lawyers and civil lawyers to serve Church and State: 'the fusion of subjective spiritual motivation with objective educational purpose' (and for a broader discussion of the medieval continental understanding of the college, see Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 136–138).

Cobban goes on to identify the key features of college autonomy: the self-governing community of fellows organised on democratic lines within the parameters of the college's Royal Charter and its Statutes, and as supervised by the Visitor (e.g. the successor Bishops of Winchester in the case of New College), with the right to elect the 'first-amongst-equals' head of house (Warden, Provost, Rector, Master, President), to add to their number (e.g. New College fellows are elected and then admitted as fellows on swearing, in medieval Latin, an oath of allegiance to the foundation).[1] In short, they exercise the sovereignty of the Governing Body of

[1]The fellows' oath of allegiance at New College, Oxford I, NN, now admitted as a Fellow of the College of Saint Mary of Winchester, founded by the reverend father Lord William of Wykeham in Oxford, pledge that I shall faithfully uphold all statutes and ordinances of said College, as well as those of the College of the Blessed Mary at Winchester [Winchester College, the public school], as far as they apply to me, and that I shall, as far as I am able, see to it that they are upheld and

the fellows acting as the corporation. Also they appoint from amongst themselves the college officers (Bursar, Seneschal of the Hall, Senior Tutor, Chattels Fellow, Librarian and even nowadays the Data Protection Officer) and select their students ('the Junior Members', comprising undergraduate Commoners and Scholars, and, these days, provide middle common rooms and residential accommodation for postgraduate students).

Cobban sums it up: 'Generally speaking, English colleges contrived to secure that the administrative burden in internal affairs fell with a distributed weight upon a broad section of the fellowship. . .. The powers of the head of college were hedged around with effective checks and balances, and, in the main, the fellows seemed to acquiesce in this form of contractual division of authority, worked out by the founder [in astonishing detail in the case of William of Wykeham's Statutes of 1400 for New College, next used as a model for Madgalen a century later] and developed and adjusted in the light of experience. . .. The combination of the ultimate deterrent – the college meeting – and the operative principle of election to administrative office, ensured that a system of responsible government was [and still is?] firmly embedded in the constitutions of most of the English medieval colleges' (Cobban, 1988, pp. 127–128).

The *sui generis* legal status of Oxbridge colleges in the context of the law relating to corporations and of charity law has been dissected by Palfreyman (1996, 1998, 1999a, 1999b). Their legal identity is complex and, even after 800 years, still evolving in that the 2006 Charities Act has ended their 'exempt charity' status so that from 2010 they will become 'registered charities' (Farrington & Palfreyman, 2006, Chapter 7). They combine lay, eleemosynary (created by a founder to disburse his/her largesse on a perpetual basis), chartered and charitable elements. They may

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observed by others. Further, that I shall be faithful as well as diligent in whatever duty it should fall to me to be assigned and to fulfil, and, when it is assigned me, I shall take it up and, as far as I can, faithfully carry it out. And that I shall be faithful to said Colleges and shall, as far as I am able, in no way cause or suffer to occur in any way any damage, scandals or prejudices against said Colleges, but in any ways I can, by my own efforts or those of others, I shall prevent their occurrence and if I myself cannot prevent them, I shall spill the beans fully to the Warden, Sub-Warden, Dean, and Bursars of said Oxford College. The Warden, Sub-Warden and other Official Fellows, in legitimate and honourable matters, and especially in the business of said Oxford College, I shall obey, assist, and obediently give to them due reverence. And I shall preserve, as far as I can, the tranquillity, peace, benefit, welfare, and honour of said Colleges and the unity of their Fellows, and take pains that they be preserved by others. Further, regarding the election and admission of Fellows to said Oxford College, I shall give and extend loyal counsel, without favour, so that said College may take forethought regarding the good, chaste, modest, and honourable persons who are most skilful and suitable for study and advancement in scholarship, according to the ordinances and statutes of said College. Further that I shall diligently assist in the improvement of said Colleges, their increase in goods, lands, possessions, and rents, and the preservation and defence of their rights, and the promotion and execution of any business of said Colleges, in whatever condition, rank, honour and office I shall later hold, with sound counsels, deeds, favours, and assistance, as far as I am able and as I can to the final and fortunate outcome of said business, as long as I live in this world. (Translated by Catherine Atherton, formerly Fellow and Tutor in Classical Philosophy, New College, Oxford.)

be corporations aggregate or, less frequently, sole (like a bishop). They will possess permanent endowment held effectively in trust for the fulfilment of the Founder's charitable objectives and accountable not only to the Founder's duly nominated Visitor but also to the High Court via the Attorney General as *parens patriae* and (from 2010) also the Charity Commissioners. The Head of House and the Fellows who constitute the incorporated Governing Body will be responsible (as fiduciaries and as trustees) for the prudent management of the corporate assets as very largely permanent endowment. Such endowment is to be applied only for charitable purposes as prescribed by the Charter and Statues, and within the regulatory regime of the Universities and Colleges Estates Act, 1925 (amended 1964), as well as that established by the Charity Commission.

Collegiality in Fiction

Consider the dust-jacket blurb for John Dougill's thoroughly readable *Oxford in English Literature: The Making, and Undoing, of 'the English Athens'* (1998):

> Following the rise of the colleges, the literature becomes characterised by a sense of insulation, for the closed collegiate structure led to elitism and eccentricity. The notion of the university as a paradise of youth, beauty, and intelligence led to the so-called Oxford myth and the backlash against it after World War II. The underlying argument of Dougill's work is that the defining symbol of Oxford is not so much the dreaming spire as the college wall, for writing about the city has been shaped and defined by the enclosed nature of the collegiate structure. In Oxford literature the college is depicted as a world of its own-secluded, conservative, and eccentric, driven by its own rituals. Idealised, it becomes a cloistered utopia, an Athenian city-state, a fantasy wonderland, or an Arcadian idyll. Exclusivity led to resentment from those on the out-side, as is evident in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. With the advent of democratic and egalitarian values in the twentieth century, the privilege and elitism of the university has come under increasing attack.

Strong stuff! And territory if anything more polemically explored in Ian Carter's *Ancient Cultures of Conceit: British University Fiction in the Post-War Years*, which dissects 'the culture celebrated in British university fiction… a culture rooted in the ivory towers of Oxbridge, a culture under threat from the proletarians, women, foreigners and scientists who flood the university…' (1990, p. 87). Carter notes that, of some 200 British 'university novels' published during 1945–1988, nearly 75% were set in Oxford or Cambridge, with over 50% in Oxford itself, and with most of them being detective stories set inside colleges where the murder rate rivals the streets of New York in a bad year. Often they are written by Oxbridge Dons, *the* exemplar for Carter being the Christ Church Don and J.I.M. Stewart (thanks to his quintet *A Staircase in Surry* – 'Surrey' being a quadrangle of the college), who used his real name when writing his 13 Oxford non-crime novels and 'Michael Innes' as his pseudonym when writing his seven Oxford mystery stories (notably *Death at the President's Lodging*, 1936, and *Operation Pax*, 1951), the latter climaxing with a 'shoot-out' in the book-stacks of the Bodleian Library deep under Radcliffe Square!

Mortimer R. Proctor in *The English University Novel* (1957) provides a more measured analysis, again noting the dominance of Oxford over Cambridge as the setting for 'the university novel' and the greater propensity of 'Oxford men' to write of their undergraduate and college days than for 'Cambridge men' to put pen to paper. He quotes from Gerald Hopkins, *A City in the Foreground* (1921): 'He has fallen prey to the first infirmity of Oxford minds – he is writing an Oxford novel.' Proctor thus identifies 'The Cult of Oxford', and within that 'a series of romantic novels glorifying college life' (notably Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson*, first published in 1911), which effectively means the cult of the college. Here he leads into the wider debate about the relative value of a liberal over a vocational education: Newman and Arnold v Bentham, Huxley and Spencer. Proctor even speculates that Cuthbert Bede's *The Adventures of Mr Verdant Green*, published very shortly after Newman's *The Idea of a University*, 'represents a waggish reply to the notion that one's college chums could in any way prove elevating. . . they did indeed teach him many things, not one of which was desirable' (1957, pp. 196–197).

Similarly, Dougill, quoting from *Zuleika Dobson*, asserts that: 'The magic derives from the myth, and the myth derives from the literature. . .' (1998, p. 1). Again, Dougill notes the Oxford bias within the genre of the university novel, the Oxford novel typically comprising 'a variation of the Dick Whittington theme in which an innocent youth goes to university with great expectations and learns the way of the world. . . Discovery of Oxford and discovery of self: here then are the twin themes of the Oxford novel' (1998, pp. 92–94). The sub-themes for Dougill are 'the student hero'; 'the championing of a laddish brotherhood'; 'dull, despicable, ridiculous or criminal' scientists; 'cultural warfare between two opposing sets' (aesthetes vs hearties); 'unabashed snobbism', 'drunken exploits', 'social pretences', 'leisured affluence' and 'a fabled land of decadent youth'.

Yet a reaction to this myth, this cult, this 'delightful lie' has occurred; there has been disenchantment, leaving the mythical Oxford of *Brideshead Revisited* (Waugh, 1945) 'today in a shaky state of uncertainty, in danger of collapse yet sustained by its own dazzling legacy' (Dougill, 1998, p. 136): 'For the post-war generation the notion of an English Athens did not seem so appealing, and for the "angry young men" of the 1950s the lie was distasteful rather than delightful. The walls of the enclosed [college] garden could no longer keep out those who had for so long been excluded [Ian Carter's "Barbarous Proletarians", "Barbarous Scientists", "Barbarous Women", and "Barbarous Foreigners"], and those on the inside were less forceful in asserting their superiority. The Oxford myth was seen as an anachronism, the pretensions of which were absurd. . .' (Dougill, 1998, p. 180).

Part of that reaction has been the already referred to tidal wave of Oxford detective novels drawing 'on notions of an academic Wonderland in which manic professors mix with absent-minded dons in a realm of antiquated customs, peculiar practices and strange language' (Dougill, 1998, p. 202). We are presented with 'a potent concoction' of 'dons, death and detection' culminating in Colin Dexter's 1990s worldwide publishing and TV success with *Inspector Morse* (now succeeded by another TV series, *Inspector Lewis*). But Dexter's view of the University is not as respectful as that of the earlier Oxford crime novel; his Inspector Morse, although

cultured, is impatient with dons in their ivory towers, suffering from what in one Dexter novel is termed 'the Oxford Disease – that tragic malady which deludes its victims into believing that they can never be wrong in any matter of knowledge or opinion' (*The Jewel That Was Ours*, 1992). If Dexter's dons get a pretty bad press, it is nothing compared to the portrayal of the college Bursar: in one TV episode a Bursar is part of a satanic rites cult, in another he spends much time taking pornographic photographs!

Similarly, Dougill notes that Veronica Stallwood's half-dozen 1990s Oxford crime novels 'feature women detectives, a pluralist city and a determinedly female point of view... far removed from the self-congratulatory tone and inside perspective of earlier fiction' (1998, p. 235), recognising Oxford's transformation from a university city of dreaming spires to a crowded commercial and tourist city of exhaust fumes, litter and screaming tyres, and hence: 'Though colleges continue to provide a haven of peace in a traffic-thronged world, glorification and idealisation are hard to find these days' (1998, p. 245). For Dougill then, there has been a welcome and realistic reaction against the Oxford myth, against the cult of Oxford, against the sanctity of the college and against 'a national propensity for exclusivity and cliquishness'. There has been a 'process of demythologising', which has been 'part of a wider move in post-imperial Britain to shake off the past' and hence the 'rejection of the English Athens can be seen as part of the process of discarding outgrown myths' as 'the Oxford myth of college-bound stories and utopian visions' is undone and gives space for Oxford to be 'reimaged' as 'an altogether different kind of Oxford' (1998, pp. 257–258). But demythologised or not, the fascination with the genre remains as potent as ever. *Inspector Morse* is replaced by his long-suffering sergeant *Lewis* in a new series, and *The Oxford Murders* (Guilermo Martínez, 2005) illustrates the worldwide appeal of Oxford's skulduggery. Moreover, Elaine Showalter reinforces the continuing interest in the analysis of the academic novel (*Faculty Tower*s, 2005).

For Dougill about the only defender of the Oxford myth in recent decades has been Carter's exemplar – that stalwart Christ Church Don, J.I.M. Stewart/Michael Innes – and especially in the quintet of novels *A Staircase in Surrey* as: 'a sustained exploration of university life', 'a gourmet feast... shared with the most erudite of companions, whose conversation sparkles with wit and learning ... a world of well-meaning dons with well-apportioned lifestyles in well-endowed colleges...' (1998, p. 207). At the centre of this 'reflective, urbane and droll' world is the college and its 'dazzling discussions at high table': 'Stewart's college is not a bureaucratic institution – but an organic body that adapts and evolves to changing circumstances ... Change within continuity is the keynote of Stewart's college ... Indeed, Stewart's novels can be seen as the fictional exposition of "The Idea of a University" for the celebration of college life is central to his concern, and his books comprise the most imposing literary monument ever raised to the institution.' (1998, p. 210).

Yet this pinnacle of defence, this unashamed celebration of collegiality, this 'gourmet feast' with 'the lush prose, the ponderous thoughts, the lavish meals, the sumptuous architecture, the privileged circumstance, the erudite wit, the obscure

quotations' (1998, p. 211) risk surfeit, and meanwhile Carter's Barbarians, stretching back to outsiders such as Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895), are pushing at the stout oak gates and tapping at the barred windows, while Dexter's *Inspector Morse* has a warrant demanding entry to 'a patrician paradise increasingly difficult to defend' in 'an age which sought greater informality and inclusiveness' (Dougill, 1998, p. 211).

Clearly, a key theme for this book is the degree to which Carter's Barbarians and Dougill's Uninvited have now acquired squatter's rights within the enchanted collegiate ivory tower and creeper-clad quadrangle. Moreover, have the changing demands of modern academic life also meant for Oxford dons a general process of disenchantment with Proctor's Cult of Collegiality and the Myth of Oxford? Does the post-war output of fiction in the genre of the university novel represent in microcosm the evolution and freeing-up of British society since 1945?

Collegiality for Newman: The Victorian Ideal

John Henry Newman (1801–1890) published *The Idea of a University* in 1852, a book that Sheldon Rothblatt claims is 'unquestionably the single most important treatise in the English language on the nature and meaning of higher education' (1997, p. 287). Newman's idea of, and ideal of, a university is very English, and very Oxford, deriving from the college life he led in the 1820s, with the university staff pursuing knowledge and with the teaching, undergraduate college ensuring the development of young men's integrity and character; the former representing change in academe and society, the latter providing stability and 'well-being'. Thus, the college in return for security, sanctuary, retreat and community on a human scale engenders great loyalty and affection amongst its alumni, whilst providing a crucial counter-point to the essentially and inevitably utilitarian objectives of the university, whose main purpose is the provision of a 'liberal education':

> This process of training, by which the intellect, instead of being formed or sacrificed to some particular or accidental purpose, some specific trade or profession, or study or science, is disciplined for its own sake, for the perception of its own proper object, and for its own highest culture, is called Liberal Education. . . And to set forth the right standard, and to train according to it, and to help forward all students towards it according to their various capacities, this I conceive to be *the business of a University*. . .
>
> (Newman, 1959, pp. 170–171, emphasis added)

The debate about just what is higher education, what is a university and the relevant merits of a Vocational Education *versus* a Liberal Education, of course, continued (Flexner, 1930; Jaspers, 1946; Whitehead, 1932) and continues to this day (Barnett, 1990; Giamatti, 1988; Kennedy, 1997; Oakley, 1992; Palfreyman, 2008b; Pelikan, 1992; Rosovsky, 1990; Ryan, 1998, to select but a few contributions).

So, Newman's Liberal Education would produce the civilised Victorian Gentleman:

> Liberal Education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman. It is well to be a gentleman, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing on the conduct of life; – these are the connatural qualities of a large knowledge; they are the objects of a University; I am advocating.
>
> (Newman, 1959, pp. 144–145)

And that gentleman would benefit from the perfect amalgam of the differing qualities of Newman's ideal university and its related colleges:

> A University embodies the principle of progress, and a College that of stability; the one is the sail, and the other the ballast; each is insufficient in itself for the pursuit, extension, and inculcation of knowledge; each is useful to the other. A University is the scene of enthusiasm, of pleasurable exertion, of brilliant display, of winning influence, of diffusive and potent sympathy; and a College is the scene of order, of obedience, of modest and persevering diligence, of conscientious fulfilment of duty, of mutual private services, and deep and lasting attachments. The University is for the world, and the College is for the nation. . .. It would seem as if a University, seated and living in Colleges, would be a perfect institution, as possessing excellences of opposite kinds.
>
> (Newman, 1902, pp. 221–222)

In return, that gentleman's character and future life would be moulded by the college, and he for evermore indebted to it:

> There is no political power in England like a College in the Universities; it is not a mere local body, as a [municipal] corporation or London [livery] company; it has allies in every part of the country. When the mind is most impressionable, when the affections are warmest, when associations are made for life, when the character is most ingenuous, and the sentiment of reverence is most powerful, the future landowner or statesman, or lawyer, or clergyman comes up to a College in the Universities. There he forms friendships, there he spends his happiest days; and, whatever is his career there, brilliant or obscure, virtuous or vicious, in after years, when he looks back on the past, he finds himself bound by ties of gratitude and regret to the memories of his College life. . . their shade becomes a sort of shrine to which he makes continual silent offerings of attachment and devotion.
>
> (Newman, 1902, p. 227)

Not surprisingly, in view of such positive associations, Newman sees the ex-student springing to the defence of his alma mater should it ever be threatened:

> When then he hears that a blow is levelled at the Colleges, and that they are in commotion – that his own College, Head and Fellows, have met together, and put forward a declaration calling on its Members to come up and rally round it and defend it, a chord is struck within him, more thrilling than any other; he burns with *esprit de corps* and generous indignation; and he is driven up to the scene of his early education, under the keenness of his feelings, to vote, to sign, to protest, to do just what he is told to do, from confidence in the truth of the representations made to him, and from sympathy with that appeal. He appears on the scene of action ready for battle on the appointed day, and there he meets others like himself, brought up by the same summons. . .. Thus, wherever you look to the North or South of England, to the East or West, you will find the interest of the Colleges dominant; they extend their roots all over the country, and can scarcely be overturned, certainly not suddenly overturned, without a revolution.
>
> (Newman, 1902, pp. 227–228)

It is interesting to speculate whether some 150 years on, the colleges would be wise to assume that they can rely on being 'the best protected interest in the whole country'!

As the nineteenth century unfolded, many great Oxford figures added to the cult (e.g. Benjamin Jowett as the Master of Balliol) and to the myth (e.g. Warden Spooner of New College), but even by the 1870s there were a few radicals around who were not imbued with the Oxford college spirit. Perhaps the most fascinating was Mark Pattison, Rector of Lincoln College, who proposed a radical programme to the 1870s' Royal Commission:

> It involved nothing less than the abolition of the colleges and the Fellowship. The buildings would not, of course, be pulled down; but the corporations would be dissolved and their endowment transferred to the University. Nine of the colleges would become the headquarters of the nine Faculties, the Senior Professor being *ex-officio* Head of each. . .. The others would be kept on as Halls of Residence for those undergraduates who preferred a communal existence or, as Pattison scornfully put it, 'who come up to get the social stamp'.
>
> (Sparrow, 1967, p. 121)

Pattison certainly pulled no punches: 'The object of these "Suggestions" has been to insist that the university shall no longer be a class-school ['for the wealthy classes'], nor mainly a school for youth at all. It is a national institute for the preservation and transmission of useful knowledge. It is the common interest of the whole community that such knowledge shall exist, shall be granted, treasured, cultivated, disseminated, expanded' (Pattison, 1868, pp. 326–327). Pattison was challenging the idea of Oxford as primarily a teaching institution for undergraduates with the colleges at its heart: as radical a transformation as could possibly be envisaged. Pattison was deeply influenced by the flourishing of scholarship in continental Europe, more especially in Germany under the guidance of the Humboldtian model (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 138–144).

Collegiality for Contemporary Pundits

In recent decades the value of Oxbridge's collegiality has been assessed by numerous observers who have differed in their evaluations of its merits as well as their estimates of its adaptability and sustainability. Rose and Ziman in their *Camford Observed* recognised 'the cult of the college' (1964, p. 246) and its innate conservatism: 'Merely living up to the magnificence of their surroundings mummifies some dons. The weight of 700 years of history expressed in such enduring shape makes them stagger. With such a heritage it is inevitable that they become traditionalist, conservative, preservationist, forever looking backwards over their shoulders' (1964, pp. 56–57). Yet these institutions, they assert, *do* adapt: 'But they have changed . . . The colleges have always resisted the forces of reform – but they have always, in the end, adapted themselves to the dictates of society . . . Their resilience is immense . . . they have survived many dangers and are still in the game. . .' (1964, p. 192). The pace of change may be slow, but it does happen: 'To expect such corporations, of their own volition, to change their nature radically, is to expect too much. The forces of change may be, in the long run, inexorable, but the time-scale

of such a change must be measured in generations' (1964, p. 247). Furthermore, ' . . . Oxford and Cambridge are much tougher than they seem. They have always shown an extraordinary capacity for survival and adaptation' (1964, p. 248).

Jan Morris offered a similar analysis, but with less confidence about whether the colleges can survive: 'This labyrinthine structure moves – not very fast, but with a ponderous and inexorable momentum, like a grand elderly Cunarder. One of these days they are sure to modernise its tangled mechanism – subdue the autonomy of the colleges . . .' (1978, p. 42). Thus, the colleges may be 'extraordinarily resilient old organisms' (1978, p. 61), but they are doomed: 'I doubt if all this independence can survive, as the world shrinks and uniformity presses in . . . The autonomy of the colleges is sure to be weakened . . . the very college spirit is half discredited, as undergraduates seem to feel the need for wider loyalties, and deliberately discard the emotions of the heart' (1978, pp. 69–70). (Thus, a youthful co-author of this book demonstrated in 1973/1974 for a Central Students Union, a facility that could have undermined collegiate life, but it is still *not* to be found in Oxford!)

However, by 1991 Peter Snow in *Oxford Observed* is more upbeat: 'But for all their weight of tradition, colleges are also surprisingly adaptable creatures . . . Their overriding role is to survive . . . There are many who predict the colleges' eventual decline and absorption into an ever encroaching, centralising university but they have shown themselves over the centuries to be amazingly hardy, protean beasts. It would be a bold man prepared to wager on their eventual demise' (Snow, 1991, pp. 89–93). And, while some dons may match their public image ('they peer suspiciously out at life like the ancient gargoyles squinting down from their own embrasured walls'), 'dons' styles and characters, like their colleges, are changing . . .', divided 'between those who are keen to prune and simplify the college lifestyle and those who seek to defend and preserve its gracious glimmers of luxury' (Snow, 1991, pp. 135–137).

Two very recent words from Oxford insiders vary sharply on the future viability of colleges. The Warden of All Souls (John Davis) offered a spirited defence of collegiality and a robust rejection of creeping bureaucratisation and managerialism within UK universities: '. . . we contrast our modern university organisation with a previous more collegial system . . . chartered corporations with an internal organisation that has generally been non-bureaucratic, and in which tasks are allocated according to skill and aptitude rather than by formal position in a hierarchy of rule-governed roles. These are collegial organisations'. The opponents of this tradition are those who '. . . urge us to abandon collegiality for more business-like models of organisation and control. . .. What we experience in short is the imposition of a rather starry-eyed mythical business-market model current in the 1980s, that captured the minds of remote and unworldly administrators who urgently desired to make the world more "efficient" . . .' (Davis, 1999, pp. 4–8). The defenders of collegiality are disadvantaged, '. . . because we hesitate to say that our model is perfect and uniquely suited to our purpose: we know that it is temporary (700 years temporary, but still impermanent) and we can imagine alternative worlds'. Nonetheless, 'We can also, in our university lives, do what we can to preserve

collegiality in a hostile environment. . .. The purpose in preserving collegiality is to keep alive . . . our model of a self-scrutinising and self-regulating body of scholars. It cannot be the only model; it is not necessarily the best. But it is one that has survived 700 years of practice, with vicissitudes, and it has served us well' (Davis, 1999, pp. 8–9).

Colin Matthew, St. Hugh's, writing in the *Oxford Magazine* was more pessimistic about college independence surviving unchanged. The threats are both internal: the fall-out from the Report of the North Commission (University of Oxford, 1997a); and external: the flow of public monies to cover college academic fees reaching the colleges via the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the University itself, rather than coming, as not so long ago it used to, directly to the colleges from the Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Matthew believes that 'financial controls act to counter autonomy . . . and will come to do so with respect to the colleges under the new conduit for the college fees . . . the new fee arrangements will in due course require much greater university involvement in college affairs, whether we like it or not, and this will lead to changes at present unforeseeable; it would be better now to admit the case and plan strategically, than to have a long attritional wrangle'. Something has to give, argues Matthew, since 'the major problem facing the University . . . is that collegiate arrangements and priorities often cause inflexibility and distortion in many of our endeavours'. Indeed, as with the reforms of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: 'It may well be that without the help of an external factor, such as a royal commission followed by legislation, we shall not make progress on the question of the further integration of thirty-six financially autonomous chartered bodies which exist in only partial alliance to the University' (Matthew, 1999, pp. 1–2).

Let Halsey (veteran academic rather than a pundit) have the last word: 'Franks [whose Commissions instigated the 1960s reforms] left the public life of Oxford as he found it, quietly led and controlled by the private life of its colleges. Thus Oxford continues to stand as a collegiate alternative to the normal professional and administrative hierarchy of university organisations in Britain and internationally' (1995, p. 166). While Halsey believes that 'Franks had magnificently redesigned the collegiate ideal in contemporary costume' nonetheless, 'the ancient autonomy was essentially undisturbed' and the 'key question' still continues to be: 'And which college are you from?' (1995, pp. 167–168). And, 'Twenty-five years after Franks the collegiate university still commands wide and powerful affections and interests' (1995, p. 174). However, this keen observer of Oxford politics ends on a note of caution: 'But the world is now more competitive and more threatening. The collegiate idea is challenged from inside and outside Oxford. Will commensality survive and, if so, with what further modifications? And, finally, if not, what kind of effective university could be envisaged for the twenty-first century' (1995, p. 174)? Although this is not the kind of equivocal judgement to encourage you to wager on the survival of collegiality, it should not be forgotten that Oxford's collegiate model has intermittently both evolved and stagnated over time. The question is whether the contemporary challenges are such that Oxford cannot hope to continue to thrive as a successful university and yet still retain the essence of its collegiate character?

Collegiality for Contemporary Dons

What follows are some comments from the authors' 30 or so interviews with a cross-section of the 1990s Oxford Dons (as listed at the end of book) on what being a fellow of a college means to them. What aspects of collegiality are of significance to them? More specifically, how does it influence their academic lives as they fulfil their teaching and research commitments? These extracts, in no special order, present themes and raise questions that will be addressed throughout the rest of the book.

- A head of house referring to the job description he had been given 'to chair all college meetings and to reconcile deeply held differences amongst the fellows'.
- Ever-increasing pressure on time means fellows are unable to pay proper attention to college governance, especially for 'the younger scientists' who often seem 'reluctant to shoulder the burdens of college life while content to enjoy its privileges'; collegiate loyalty now much more fragile amongst academics; conversely, other interviewees felt science fellows *did* pull their collegiate weight while also enjoying 'the interdisciplinary nature of the college and a pleasing social context'.
- The expansion of student numbers, plus the demands of family life and commuting (not all Dons live in genteel but expensive North Oxford, or even in Oxford itself), means 'a decline in collegiality as traditionally understood'.
- But collegiality is *not* a static concept and 'needs to evolve to meet contemporary pressures'.
- Still a widespread view that being a fellow is 'a wonderful privilege' ('being enveloped by an aura of warmth and privilege'), and that collegiality is worth preserving.
- Students see themselves as belonging to a particular college rather than to the University; 'a life-long loyalty to the college' as the provider of 'an excellent learning environment' and hence the college imprints a strong sense of identity/belonging on the student.
- Optimism concerning the adaptability of the collegiate model, given that 'its core values are positive in their own right'.
- Lack of personal accountability in the model, hence there is the 'risk of personal irresponsibility'; 'too easy to shift the blame when things go wrong'; the need for 'mutual trust' of each other, of college sub-committees, of college officers.
- Identification of an inner core of richer colleges 'better placed to sustain collegiality'.
- The college as 'a refuge from the academic department', even 'an alternative career line'; colleges as providing 'an independent base which counters hierarchical tendencies in the faculties'; academics making varying inputs to research and college teaching/governance 'at differing stages of their careers'; the need 'to balance pressures and establish priorities'; but conversely college as 'a constraint upon the professional careers of the tutors'.
- Worry over allegations of sexual harassment with teaching students in 'single tutorials' (one keeps the 'office' door open!).

– Few fellows now live in college and hence have anything other than formal tutorial contact with 'the young'.
– Lunch replacing High Table dinner as the occasion when the Dons share commensality, 'a lot of interaction'.
– Increasing reluctance to take on college jobs.
– Collegiality unable to make 'swift and tough decisions', 'a model in which positive change occurs only when the external pressures become intolerable', 'collegiate model stagnating'.
– Collegiality 'looks upon leadership with suspicion' as a 'subversive of collegial authority'.
– Colleges fine for students but work less well for academics in terms of the conflicting demands it imposes upon them.
– Need for 'a progressive merging of colleges' to create 'a more efficient and economical system of government and administration'.
– 'The occasional tendency of an individual college to act contrary to the collective good', given college autonomy and the Conference of Colleges being merely 'a talking-shop' whose decisions (if any!) are not binding; 'Inevitable that the colleges can not continue as sovereign bodies'; 'some acting as a law unto themselves'; need for 'more pulling together'; 'talented people leaving Oxford out of frustration and inability to change things'.
– Collegiality 'in the sense of sustaining donnish dominion very fragile without a measure of financial independence'.
– Colleges 'better governed than the University, more open, more manageable, greater equality'; conversely, some saw colleges as 'clubs', as 'closed communities', as 'too inbred'.
– Collegiality 'peculiar to England' where still 'a vigorous and influential idea', but being weakened by the dominance of research – productivity as the measure of career success for academics and hence ' the embracing of values that are unsympathetic to collegiality', leaving the risk that in the twenty-first century Oxford will be merely an uneasy mix of 'one-man business' careerist academics and an international bourgeois student clientele.
– College as a 1970s commune, dependence on the community and close control by the community, no room for a 'free-ride'.
– The importance (to some) of the sovereignty of the University's Congregation, the Parliament of the Dons, as mirroring the sovereignty of the Governing Body of the college; the authority/power of former as more latent whereas a more hands-on input demanded by the latter.
– Collegiality at 'an attitude of mind', as being 'based upon shared social ties and a sense of common purpose' (and hence a natural limit to the size of an effective Governing Body?) – 'small is beautiful' (or 'small is uneconomic and inefficient'?)
– Collegial governance and commensality contrasted with 'intellectual collegiality', with Oxford stronger on the former than the latter (especially in the Arts where no physical faculty/subject centres exist, other than specialist libraries and perhaps a

faculty office) and where the colleges do *not* provide the opportunity for serious academic inter-disciplinarity.

To round off the personal insights and form a bridge to the next section, we draw upon an observation on the comparative quality of the lunch and dinner conservations of academics in English departments at different UK universities:

> It's not the done thing to talk about your subject very intensely, except with other members of the subject. If you sit next to someone at lunch and start telling them about textual strategies in Old Norse poetry, they look at you slightly anxiously and start edging away. I'm always struck by the incredible ordinariness of the conversations we seem to have in the SCR. I had a conversation the other day about the relative merits of upright and horizontal vacuum cleaners. I used to be a chambermaid in a Norwegian hotel and I had very strong views on that. People who move from here to go to other universities say how nice it is to spend most of your time talking to people who know where you're coming from, as distinct from making small talk with physicists.
>
> (Evans, 1993, p. 101)

Thus, our small sample of interviewees expresses a very wide range of views, which raises the interesting point that, although it may be possible to construct a broadly shared understanding of the idea of collegiality, what it means in terms of daily working-lives is very much dependent upon personal experiences. Just as Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy encompasses a conflicting range of personal experiences, so the same is true of the idea of collegiality.

Collegiality in Management Theory

How universities are governed has long been a topic of interest and has led to a steady and, in recent years, an increasing flow of publications. The earliest volume is the notably and justly famous, and oft-relaunched and reprinted, *Microcosmographia Academica* (Cornford, 1908); there is also *University Administration* (Eliot, 1909). With the exceptions of Fielden and Lockwood (1973), Livingstone (1974), Moodie and Eustace (1974), Lockwood and Davies (1985) and Bland (1990), there was relative silence on university management in the United Kingdom before the 1990s' explosion when a host of publishers unleashed a torrent of print in books and specialist journals.

This is certainly not the place to attempt a critical synthesis of so much material, but, while risking over-simplification, suffice to say that the collegial ideal is as powerful and attractive a model for academics worldwide as it ever was. Albeit it is now often perceived as a Holy Grail rarely attained and increasingly challenged by a managerialist culture and a top-down model of governance. Indeed, Dearlove writes of universities being forced into 'a stark choice between the alleged democracy of a whimsical collegiality or the problematic efficiency of a hard-nosed managerialism' (1995, p. 25).

Nonetheless, one American commentator was bold enough to declare that: 'The type of government established early in the life of Oxford and Cambridge was the

goal of most academics in other universities' (Ross, 1976, p. 180). And another proclaimed: 'There are those who deny, because they believe so strongly in collegiality and consent, that a university can or should be tended and managed as an organisation. Some managerial techniques would damage both individual autonomy and collegial cohesion to the point where the essentials of the university would be lost' (Balderston, 1974, p. 367). Moodie and Eustace, noting Oxford's 1960s Franks Report, found that Oxbridge's consensual democracy 'would also be widely accepted outside Oxbridge as an ideal for all universities and even as a partial description of most' (1974, p. 221). They concluded that: 'The supreme authority, provided that it is exercised in ways responsive to others, must therefore continue to rest with the academics for no one else seems sufficiently qualified to regulate the public affairs of scholars' (1974, p. 233). Furthermore, Balderston saw collegiality as the antidote to 'disinterest, isolation and intransigence', as an ideal that would prevent a university being 'reduced to a collection of buildings and paper and meaningless routines' (Balderston, 1974, pp. 36–37).

Bess, in his useful review of the theories of university organisation (bureaucratic, collegiate, political and organised anarchy), pessimistically argues that:

> The idea persists... that decision-making in academic matters is in some way bound up in a courtly dance of deference and participation called collegiality. In point of fact, the idea of collegiality, while long-standing, has a variety of meanings, none of which fully explains academic decision-making; and ... as a normative condition in higher education probably is not widespread except in rudimentary forms of wishes and hopes for cooperation and the structure for exchanging worries and promises...
>
> (Bess, 1988, pp. 34–35)

Moreover, collegiality,

> despite its frequent use in the language of governance, is a relatively unexplored concept, certainly little understood in terms of standard organisational theory. Since the claim is frequently made that collegiality is critical to organisational effectiveness in higher education, it is important that educational leaders have more precise notions of the concept and the phenomena to which it refers.
>
> (Bess, 1988, p. 86)

To aid clarification, Bess continues by presenting his own understanding of the concept:

> ... Collegiality consists of three distinct components. The first is *culture* (or normative framework); the second, decision-making *structure*; and the third the process of *behaving*, which is constrained by the first two. As a culture, collegiality comprises an unevenly distributed set of beliefs about what is appropriate behaviour in the organisation; as a decision-making structure, collegiality is a formal, manifested set of organisational rules for decisions to be made ... and as a process, collegiality is a behaviour set governing individual action and interaction among faculty and between faculty and administrators, and is guided by both culture and structure.
>
> (Bess, 1988, pp. 86–87)

Dopson and McNay similarly place their understanding of collegiality in a broader organisational model of higher education (see Fig. 2.1). In describing the four types of organisation (the collegium or the collegial academy, the bureaucracy,

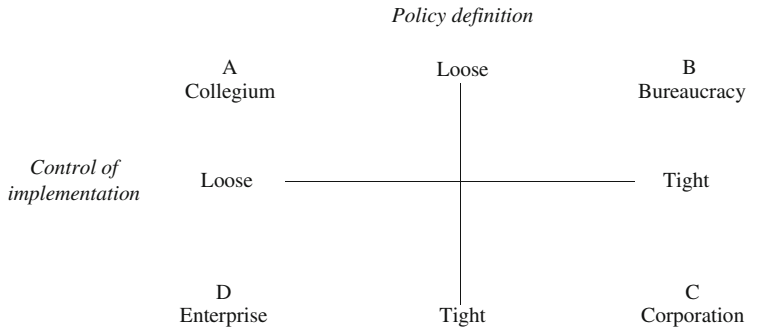

Fig. 2.1 Models of universities as organisations (Source: Dopson & McNay, 1996, p. 25)

the corporation and the entrepreneurial university), they refer to 'the fragmented, fissiparous collegium' as 'the ideal of a past golden age of self-regulating academics working in the same place but independently and autonomously, indulged in as elite intellectuals by the state'. In England these academics shared a 'common culture' with their establishment sponsors of which 'the domination of Oxbridge was the key to this coexistence. . .' (Dopson & McNay, 1996, p. 25).

Charles Handy labels these collegial academics 'organisations of consent' and views them somewhat more positively than Dopson and McNay, although the latter, by way of mitigation, later comment: 'collegiality may not be *efficient* by the norms of other organisations, but it may be more *effective* in achieving the outcome of a "good university" than rampant managerialism' (1996, pp. 30–31). Handy also sees the federal model as effective for the large organisation coping with rapid change: 'Federalism is an old idea, but its time may have come again, because it has been designed to create a balance of power within an institution . . . There is room in federalism for the small to influence the mighty, and for individuals to flex their muscles . . . federalism is an exercise in the balancing of power . . . it is messy, untidy and always a little out of control . . . [but] there is no real alternative in a complicated world' (1994, p. 98).

Rothblatt has also extensively explored 'the federal principle' in higher education, and the histories of Oxford, Cambridge and London are contrasted with the experience of American campuses. He sums up federalism as a model for the organisation of the Victorian university: 'It was a compromise between a belief in the importance of individual competition and a fear of the wasteful consequences of institutional rivalry. Federation balanced private and public interest, enabling universities to maintain a working distinction between college work and university standards' (Rothblatt, 1987, p. 180). In effect it was an organisational principle that combined Newman's notion of the need for ballast and sail with Handy's idea of the small influencing the mighty.

If there is rampant managerialism in British higher education it is most likely to be found, thanks to the legacy of their historical forms of governance, in the new, post-1992 universities. Warren calls for new university managerialism to be

tempered with a dose of old-fashioned collegiality: 'When the polytechnics were made into the "new" universities they started to dismantle the key elements of collegiality which are the main source of their stability and vitality. Consequently, the new universities are starting to exhibit the traits of bureaucratic anomic life: increased conflict, staff dissatisfaction and alienation which can be redeemed only by a restoration of elements of collegiate life which will help to renew their moral authority, shared academic values and service of community…' (Warren, 1994, p. 36). Ryder goes so far as to compare 'authoritarian management' in some UK universities with the former centrally planned economies of the old USSR and its eastern European satellites! He comments that 'University Senates or Councils have been dispensed with in the name of efficiency, and replaced by a kind of University Politburo which operates behind closed doors' (Ryder, 1996, p. 56; and for a broad overview of the spread of the new managerial ethos in British higher education, see Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 93–110).

The dangers of making judgements on the managerial effectiveness of collegiality without locating the analysis in a comparative framework are that it is all too easy to arrive at both facile negative and positive generalisations. In their review of the literature on the governance of higher education, Bargh, Scott and Smith reiterate many of the traditional objections:

> The collegiate model itself is not without flaws, however. First, it can be presented as conceptually naive, romantic even, since it underplays the extent of differences and competing interests arising from the diversity of members and disciplines. In periods of unfavourable economic conditions, conflict can arise over scarce resources, rendering the model inadequate. Second, it can be seen as operationally dysfunctional because the bedrock of the model, the committee system, is frequently in tension with policy and strategy formation. Over-reliance on committees can be criticised for leading to delays in decision-making, impeding individual initiative and leadership and creating uncertainty over both the finality of decisions and responsibility for their implementation.
>
> (Bargh, Scott, & Smith, 1996, p. 30)

But this is old territory and was clearly of concern as early as in 1218 when the Chancellor of the University of Paris was driven to comment: 'In the old days when… the name of Universities was unknown, lectures… were more frequent and there was more zeal for study. But now that you are invited into a University lectures are rare, things are hurried and little is learned, the time taken for lectures being spent in Meetings and discussion' (as quoted in Moodie & Eustace, 1974, p. 11).

In a similar vein Cornford could remark about the 1900s' Cambridge:

> It is impossible to enjoy the contemplation of truth if one is vexed and distracted by the sense of responsibility. Hence the wisdom of our ancestors devised a form of academic polity in which this sense is, so far as human imperfection will allow, reduced to the lowest degree … we have succeeded only in minimising the dangerous feeling, by the means of never allowing anyone to act without first consulting at least twenty other people who are accustomed to regard him with well-founded suspicion.…. It is clear, moreover, that twenty independent persons, each of whom has a different reason for not doing a certain thing, and no one of whom will compromise the other, constitute a most effective check upon the rashness of individuals.
>
> (Cornford, 1908, pp. 16–17)

And a 1960s' vice chancellor (Sir Charles Carter of Lancaster University) ruefully recorded his experience of collegiality as consensus:

> It is important to begin by recognising that many academic persons enjoy having their days broken up by activities other than teaching or research. Many also believe themselves to be wiser, more intelligent and more honest than their colleaues, and in every way vastly superior to the morons they employ as professional administrators, so it is no more than public duty requires if they ensure their own participation in the maximum number of decisions, and in the execution of the maximum number of administrative tasks. So committees grow large and numerous, the weight of paper increases, and the air resounds with cries about the folly of large committees and unnecessary paperwork; the chief complainants being, of course, those who would be most insulted to be left off a committee, and who are most assiduous in reminding the administration of the need for things to be in writing.
>
> (as quoted in Moodie & Eustace, 1974, p. 81)

Inevitably in such circumstances the university would grind to a halt and one can imagine the development of informal structures of governance and administration to prevent the emergence of a crisis. Such a necessity would signify the failure of the collegial model but comparison is needed to ascertain how often such a calamitous situation actually occurs and precisely how effectively other models function.

Moreover, for every negative experience of collegial decision-making there are those prepared to praise its positive effects. For example Hardy, in discussing the management of retrenchment within Canadian universities, sees 'institutional collegiality' as:

> an important mechanism in managing the competing pressures currently facing universities. . . It motivates diverse members of the community to participate in strategic initiatives and support a shared conception of the organisational mission. . . The only problem is that university actors have little guidance on how to create and sustain collegiality, particularly in the light of the increasing emphasis on managerialist techniques, which largely ignore these matters. How then can collegiality be managed?
>
> (Hardy, 1996, pp. 183–184)

Thus, Hardy has no desire to either abolish or by-pass collegiality but rather to ensure its effective utilisation in order to maximise its positive qualities while avoiding the absurdities to which both Cornford and Carter refer.

To conclude with this optimistic note we will turn to Berquist who has presented perhaps the most comprehensive and detailed study of university organisation. In the first edition of his text he centres his analysis around 'the four cultures of the academy': the collegial culture, the managerial culture, the developmental culture and the negotiating culture. The collegial culture:

> . . . finds meaning primarily in the disciplines represented by the faculty in the institution; that values faculty research and scholarship and the quasi-political governance processes of the faculty; that holds untested assumptions about the dominance of rationality in the institution; and that conceives of the institution's enterprise as the generation, interpretation, and dissemination of knowledge and as the development of specific values and qualities of character among young men and women who are future leaders of our society.
>
> (Berquist, 1992, pp. 4–5)

Berquist goes on to identify 'the images and myths of the collegial culture', and the fact that real academic life somehow rarely matches up to the ideal:

'Administrators are never as wise or as responsive as they could be. Colleagues are never as bright, well read, or as articulate as they ought to be. Students are never as appreciative of a liberal arts education as they should be; certainly, they are not as competent and well-prepared as the despairing faculty member would like them to be' (Berquist, 1992, p. 29). Yet, reality gap or not, it is this collegial culture that for so long held '... sway over the norms and values of most American colleges and universities' (Berquist, 1992, p. 169). And why? 'Perhaps one of the reasons why the collegial culture has remained dominant over many years of change in American higher education is its blend of flexibility and ambiguity, on the one hand, and stability and predictability, on the other' (Berquist, 1992, p. 229). Moreover, he retains this optimism although expanding in the second edition of his book 'the cultures of the academy' from four to six (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008). Therefore, like Hardy, Berquist sees a continuing, perhaps dominant, role for the collegial culture and would counsel against a style of academic leadership and governance that relies entirely on any one culture, certainly not the managerial or corporate culture alone. Although, as our wider study of collegiality (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010) argues, while the norms and values of the collegial tradition may persist, the manner in which most institutions of higher education in North America actually function is so often very different.

Conclusion: Collegiality, the Model

Drawing on all of the above – the dictionary and historical definitions, the fictional image and magic, the Newmanesque ideal, the analysis of acute observers, the experience of Oxford contemporary participants, the concepts and models of the management and organisation theorists – we derive for the purposes of this book a model of collegiality that operates on different levels. First, in its most idealised, romanticised and mythical form, within the jealously guarded autonomy of college itself inside the collegiate universities of Oxford and Cambridge – and to be found nowhere else. This is *the collegiality of the colleges*. Second, in the self-governing *demos* of 'Senior Members' as expressed in the dons' Parliament (Congregation at Oxford, Regent House at Cambridge) – again not to be found in such pristine form elsewhere (all other UK universities being lay-controlled by their Councils or Boards of Governors, while US universities have their lay-dominated Trustees). This is *collegiality as academic demos*. Third, within day-to-day working relationships as professionals interacting with colleagues to fulfil the purposes of teaching and research. This is *intellectual collegiality*.

At this third level, collegiality is to be found in many, or even all, universities, but it is often perceived to be under threat from the increasing emergence of a more pronounced academic hierarchy. Also at this third level, collegiality in many UK universities is said to be threatened by a tendency towards a managerialist style in decision-making within both academic departments and central bodies (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 107–110).

Certainly Fergus Millar, the University's Camden Professor of Ancient History and a member of Oxford's Hebdomadal Council, detected a cause for concern regarding the unseemly haste, in his view, with which the proposals for changes in the governance of the University recommended by the 1997 North Commission were pushed through Oxford's decision-making system. In the same edition of the *Oxford Magazine* in which Colin Matthew wrote about the future 'greater university involvement in college affairs', Millar reported that the Hebdomadal Council, the University's chief executive body (now known simply as the Council), spent only some 30 minutes on the Report of the Working Party on Governance (established to consider the proposals of the North Commission). He remarked: 'Members of Congregation will be amazed to learn that constitutional changes of this level of importance were simply taken along with other business at a normal meeting... Discussion was therefore wholly inadequate...' And he goes on to express his belief that 'the fundamental principle of representative democracy is seriously affected [by] a centralising, "top-down" structure, in which there are inadequate constitutional safeguards' and he calls for time to allow 'proper consideration' on the assumption that 'we genuinely care about the longer-term future of the University' (Millar, 1999, pp. 4–5).

Of course Millar's reaction may have simply reflected his own hostility to the proposals but he did raise the possibility that the days for collegiality as academic *demos* within the University may be numbered. However, as this book in its analysis of the governance of the University and its colleges will discuss, the sovereignty of Congregation remains intact, and the successful resistance to proposals for lay majority representation on Council, which came to a head in the final years of the vice-chancellorship of John Hood, demonstrates that there is still a powerful commitment to Oxford's traditional understanding of academic demos. However, that may have been but a skirmish in a war that could yet be lost, although it seems unlikely that Hood's successor, Andrew Hamilton, would want to embrace further conflict (see, pp. 140–141).

That said, it remains to be seen whether the following fine words from the University's publicity brochure will one day ring hollow, especially in view of the tensions that will be generated within the collegiate university, thanks to the severe cuts in the public funding of higher education that will be imposed over the next 3 years.

> The relation between the University and the colleges has evolved over more than 800 years. It is not a simple one, but it works. The autonomy of the colleges is fiercely guarded by them, and respected by the University. The interrelationship is something like that of a family, where some decisions are taken on behalf of all by the 'head of household', but the independence of action of all the individual members is recognised as essential in producing a vitality and variety which other, more monolithic, structures could not accomplish. It also allows fruitful opportunities for experiment and development. Revision of the relationship continues constantly, as the gradual reforms over the centuries testify.
>
> (University of Oxford, 1999, p. 7)

In what form, if at all, will collegiality survive the continuous pressures – both internal and external – for change? What might be the spillover effect of any such

change within the University upon collegiality inside its colleges? Could the colleges end up as the final oasis of collegiality within a more managerialist University of Oxford? Or will the college's collegiality baby be drowned in the University's managerialist bathwater? Or are colleges changing anyway, steadily remoulded by the same forces driving the University and the system of higher education more generally? Could it be that the fellows no longer want to behave collegially, to be so protective of college autonomy, to be so precious about the sovereignty of the Governing Body? Have they other, more significant, interests to pursue? Moreover, does today's undergraduate want to spend 3 years in the bosom of the college? Will the strategies adopted in response to the current funding cuts not only weaken collegial behaviour but also undermine costly tutorial teaching, which is so integral to the collegial tradition?

Thus, we will explore in this book the dimensions and parameters of collegiality at level one, that of the college tradition within the collegiate university: the significance of self-government (the sovereignty of the Governing Body); independence in selecting and electing colleagues as fellows ('senior members'); the choosing of students ('junior members'); the teaching of these students (the tutorial system); the loyalty of those students whilst studying at the college and then life long as alumni ('old members'); financial autonomy (the endowment) and the potential extra cost of collegiality; and not least in terms of possible diseconomies of scale, their ability to sustain commensality ('high table'). Is collegiality within the colleges becoming financially unviable? Does running the colleges consume too much academic time? Are the financial costs of the diseconomies of scale and the potential management inefficiencies too great? And who ultimately pays for it: the taxpayer via enhanced funding for Oxbridge, the student personally paying both academic fees and residential accommodation charges, old members thanks to a steady stream of donations, the founder via the original endowment (including the possibility of richer colleges being more severely taxed to support poorer ones) or the generation of other income-streams such as accommodating conferences?

In the final chapter we will place the collegiate model of the university within the wider UK higher education context, before concluding in the Postscript with four possible scenarios for the long-term sustainability of collegiality in Oxford. This will provide the opportunity to reveal our personal predictions on whether Oxford as a collegiate university and the collegiate tradition it has embellished with its colleges as autonomous corporations can survive another generation, let alone until the end of the first century in the new millennium. Of course, this will mean reviewing the scenarios for the future of Oxford's collegiality that we presented in the first edition and evaluating the impact of the intervening years upon their subsequent evolution.

Chapter 3
Continuity and Change in the Collegiate Tradition

> *The universities of the world have entered a time of disquieting turmoil that has no end in sight. As the difficulties of universities mounted across the globe during the last quarter of the twentieth century, higher education lost whatever steady state it may have once possessed.*
>
> (Burton Clark, 1998)

Introduction

Even the most cursory glance at the histories of Oxford and Cambridge reveals that, while colleges may have existed for centuries, the collegial tradition has evolved over time. Indeed, institutions that exist to fulfil important social functions have little choice but to adapt to the pace of societal change and those that fail to do so will either be marginalised or perish. The question is what impact the process of adaptation has had upon the idea of collegiality? Is it a concept that can be stretched to the point where in effect it has no intrinsic meaning? Or, does it embrace core values and practices that must be retained if it is to sustain its conceptual integrity. If so, what are those core values and practices?

The purpose of this chapter is to explore various facets of the process of continuity and change within the collegial tradition. There is an initial examination of the reformulation of the collegial tradition in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This chapter draws upon this period to establish the contention that the contemporary understanding of collegiality was a Victorian creation. This model of collegiality came under steady pressure throughout the twentieth century with, arguably, pressure turning into attack in the twenty-first century. Our second task is to outline in bold terms the different collegial traditions of Oxford and Cambridge, which draws upon the contrasting academic trajectories of the two universities. The third task of this chapter is to present an interpretation of the process of past change, and then in the conclusion to raise the question of whether the contemporary pressures can be accommodated in a manner that will permit a continuation of the collegial tradition. In the following chapters, the book will then address this issue

T. Tapper, D. Palfreyman, *Oxford, the Collegiate University*, Higher Education Dynamics 34, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0047-5_3,

with reference to how the University of Oxford performs its key functions. How has Oxford responded to those pressures for change? Does the University still embraces a collegial tradition, and what is its future?

The Rise of the Collegial Tradition: State-Sponsored Class Accommodation

In his *The Rise of the Undergraduate College* McConica writes:

> At the centre of these changes – notably the disappearance of the religious orders, the resort to the university of increasing number of laymen, the vast enlargement of royal authority and the expansion of the curriculum – was the secular college, which in the Tudor period replaced the medieval hall as the typical home of the undergraduate. The resulting growth of the colleges in size and influence, and their physical supplanting or absorption of the medieval halls made Oxford take on, socially and architecturally, the face we know today.
>
> (McConica, 1986, pp. 1–2)

Broadly speaking the purposes of the undergraduate college were to establish an acceptable measure of social control over the undergraduate population at large, to provide an education 'to fortify the secular clergy' (McConica notes that under the terms of the Tudor statutes of the Oxford colleges '. . . all MAs except those studying civil law or medicine were to proceed to the priesthood within a year of completing their regency'; McConica, 1986, p. 4) and to provide a milieu, probably best described as a finishing school, for the sons of the nobility and gentry. Whatever other changes may have occurred, these purposes remained essentially intact until the nineteenth century, indeed until the second half of the nineteenth century.

The nineteenth century generated two critical developments in English university education: the foundation of the civic universities, which offered an alternative model of university education to Oxbridge's collegial tradition, and a sustained effort to recreate the character of the collegiate universities. In terms of Margaret Scotford Archer's analytical framework, English university education was exposed to two interrelated processes of change: 'substitution' – the creation of new models of the university designed to serve differing interests – and 'restriction' – the erosion of the rights of dominant interests, more especially the rights of the Anglican Church, at both the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and their respective colleges (Archer, 1979, pp. 89–142). These developments are broadly parallel to the changes that occurred in the private secondary sector in which new schools, with 'modern' subjects, were established to cater for an emerging bourgeoisie, which only later in the century started to penetrate in significant numbers the grander public schools (Tapper, 1997, pp. 37–46).

The assertive bourgeoisie, especially those from Nonconformist families, were demanding to be admitted to the ancient universities and the sweeping away of the restrictions that determined who should be awarded scholarships and fellowships. Complementing the pressure for less socially restrictive and more meritocratic channels of access was the belief that an Oxbridge education should equip its students for a wider range of professions than membership of the Anglican clergy or the teaching

ranks of the public schools. At the very least, it was essential to restore their reputations for imparting adequate medical and legal training. A measure of the success of this pressure is that by the end of the century neither Oxford nor Cambridge can still be regarded as appendages of the established Church. By 1900 they were secular institutions whose purpose was to serve the interests of a wide segment of the bourgeoisie, as reflected in the social backgrounds of the students they recruited and the careers their graduates subsequently pursued. While the clergy still retained considerable appeal as a respectable profession, the liberal professions at large and public service, both at home and overseas, assumed a greater prominence (Brooke, 1993, pp. 601–603; Curthoys, 1997b, pp. 477–510).

The essence of the argument, therefore, is that the collegiate universities were reshaped in the latter half of the nineteenth century because the emerging bourgeoisie was able to exert sufficient political power over a long enough time period to push through the reforms it demanded. Even if one rejects the claims of certain contemporary reformers that the true purposes of both Oxford and Cambridge had been subverted by the private interests of their colleges (Hamilton, 1831a, 1831b), there was, nonetheless, a growing realisation that, unless the universities and their colleges accommodated the emerging economic and political forces that followed in the wake of industrialisation, they would be marginalised. At the same time, although education for the professions and public service could have been met by founding new institutions, incorporating the ancient collegiate universities would impart a comforting status to professional training that could not be obtained elsewhere. However, it is important to remember that this was a protracted process of change: neither the gentlemen commoners nor the pass-men were squeezed out of either Oxford or Cambridge at this stage (indeed, Curzon is defending the pass-men into the twentieth century; Curzon, 1909, pp. 115–118), the interests of the established Church were eroded rather than exorcised, and while careers in the liberal professions and the public services were embraced, there was – arguably – a more lukewarm attitude towards manufacturing industry and the technical professions (Edgerton, 1996, pp. 26–28).

And yet, what most decidedly did occur in the latter half of the nineteenth century is that the two ancient English universities evolved from being universities that contained colleges towards becoming collegiate universities that embraced a particular tradition of higher education. There was a steady shift from universities that contained a number of self-governing states (the colleges) to a federal model (more fully formed at Cambridge). Both colleges and universities, while always considered to be autonomous self-governing institutions, now had a form of governance in which sovereignty resided with the assembled dons. Although any attempt to discover how the colleges and Universities were governed would commence with an examination of their statutes, these no longer represented the dead hand of an oppressive past because procedural means were established to enable the current dons to change them. Colleges persisted as comparatively small communities composed of tutorial fellows who lived in college and were still, although this was declining, bachelors in Holy Orders. Colleges were not simply halls of residence as undergraduates both resided and also were taught in those colleges that had

admitted them. Moreover, a sense of belonging to an intimate community bound tutors and undergraduates together: living under the same roof, attendance at services in the college chapel (again in decline, although some colleges tried to enforce attendance!), dining together, reading parties and participation in inter-collegiate athletic competitions. The reputation of a college was established as much, if not more, on the sports field and on the river as in the examination hall. Yet again it is impossible not to be reminded of the parallel changes that were sweeping through those major public schools in the grip of their great reforming headmasters.

Although the curriculum at both Oxford and Cambridge expanded in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the commitment to a liberal education remained; the purpose of learning was to train the mind rather than to impart practical skills. For the college the tutorial, the weekly face-to-face confrontation between tutor and undergraduate, was the centrepiece of its pedagogy. The tutorial was the means of transmitting a particular intellectual style and perhaps even the wider cultural ethos that it was necessary to imbibe if the benefits of the collegial tradition were to be fully appreciated. And, as much as its detractors have disparaged this tradition – those contemporaries like Mark Pattison who came to argue that the colleges and their fellowships should be abolished and their resources devoted to creating 'a national institute for the preservation and tradition of useful knowledge' (as quoted in Sparrow, 1967, p. 123), or those numerous twentieth century critics who have continuously vilified Oxbridge because of its social exclusivity – it has proven remarkably resilient. It is a coherent tradition in the sense that its various parts add up to a self-reinforcing, self-perpetuating and self-regenerating whole. It has an internal logic to it and, while one may not be able to empathise with all its purposes, it is impossible to deny its combination of strength and simplicity. More importantly, from the perspective of understanding the process of educational change, it represented a perfect response to the new social demands that the ancient universities were under pressure to fulfil.

Our interpretation of the change process in nineteenth century Oxbridge occupies a position somewhere between that presented by, on the one hand, the sociologists Halsey and Trow and, on the other hand, by the historian Lawrence Stone. Halsey and Trow have maintained that crucial to understanding why Britain, unlike Germany, ' . . . failed to develop university institutions for the training of scientists and technologists and the development of applied scientific research . . .' was partly a consequence of 'the social isolation of the ancient English universities'. Dons kept themselves at a distance from the industrialists and, in return, the colleges were regarded with great suspicion by businessmen (Halsey & Trow, 1971, pp. 47–80). However, in his analysis of '*The Size and Composition of the Oxford Student Body, 1580–1910*', Stone has claimed that major shifts in the size of the student body are powerful indicators of 'critical changes in the inner dynamism of the institution' and that an expansion of numbers indicates that the university is moving to 'the centre of the new developments of the day' (Stone, 1974, pp. 4–5). Furthermore, the expansion of student numbers in the latter half of the nineteenth century was indicative of the fact that Oxford was adopting 'the values and aspirations of the bourgeoisie' (Stone, 1974, p. 65).

The respective positions of both Halsey/Trow and Stone are too sweeping. It may well be true that in Halsey and Trow's criteria (links to manufacturing industry, an advocacy of the entrepreneurial ethos and the sponsorship of applied science), the collegiate universities remained isolated from the mainstream of economic development in spite of the reforms instigated post-1850. However, what is equally true, and of great significance with respect to understanding the change process, is that they established critical links with key sections of the expanding bourgeoisie, whilst weakening their ties to the Anglican Church and redefining them to the gentry. In other words, Oxford and Cambridge were not so much isolated from society but rather they established particular patterns of social interaction, patterns that enabled them to weather, at least in the short run, massive social change.

The problem with Stone's analysis is that he fails to dissect in sufficient detail the social differentiation that occurs as a consequence of economic change. It could be reasonably argued that the collegiate universities were regenerated in the latter half of the nineteenth century because they did *not* move to 'the centre of the new developments of the day' but they *did* establish critical new social ties, whilst holding onto much of their traditional social base. Indeed, to have moved to 'the centre of developments' (especially if we are to interpret this in the manner implied by Halsey and Trow) may well have destroyed both Oxford and Cambridge as collegiate universities! Refurbishment was dependent upon the ability to establish a particular social network: very prestigious, socially exclusive and tied into very important developments within the labour market but keeping at a distance from the mainstream of the nation's economic trajectory. The question is how long this would enable the collegial tradition to prosper or, even more to the point, how long that tradition would be allowed to flourish on those terms.

In this change process, it is important to note the interaction of two labour market developments. The collegial universities started to provide an education that ensured access to a wider range of bourgeois – especially liberal professional – occupations. It is not simply – as Stone has argued – that Oxford adapted to 'the values and aspirations of the bourgeoisie' but, almost certainly, it helped to shape – along with the Cambridge colleges – the content of those values. In other words, in order to secure entry to the high-status professions and the upper reaches of the civil service, home and abroad, it was deemed essential to have acquired a liberal education. And who provided the best liberal education? The answer was known to everyone – the ancient collegiate universities. Therefore, it was this power to influence the character of the product required by this elevated segment of the labour market that ensured both the continuing dominance of the collegiate universities within the British system of higher education and the strength of the collegial tradition (Perkin, 1989).

As Oxbridge and its colleges were reformed in the nineteenth century, the major change that befell them is that they became independent centres of teaching and learning as opposed to being part and parcel of the established Church. College teaching, leavened by the pursuit of scholarship (Engel, 1983, pp. 122–129), became a respectable profession in its own right and the college tutors emerged as the most powerful interest group within the two universities. College teaching was not a

marginal occupation with its practitioners desperately seeking employment in other institutions of higher education (the Scottish universities or the emerging English civics), much as the fellows of yesteryear had hung onto their fellowships in the hope that a comfortable church living would soon appear so they could escape the, at best, spartan blessings of collegiality (notwithstanding the oft-quoted gourmet experiences of Parson Woodford at eighteenth century New College). In fact all the evidence is to the contrary. To be a fellow and tutor of an Oxbridge college has been reaffirmed by academics as representing the pinnacle of a donnish career (Halsey & Trow, 1971, pp. 228–235; Halsey, 1995, pp. 192–199, 208–215). Moreover, how else are we to explain the continuing presence of those numerous part-time, poorly paid (usually by the hour) souls who eke out a living by undertaking tutorial teaching, the very personification of an academic lumpen proletariat?

The emergence of the English civic universities presented alternative models of higher education, which had their own relationships to the labour market (Ashby, 1958; Sanderson, 1972; Jones, 1988), and created a different understanding of an academic career. With the partial exception of Durham (and in the twentieth century York, Kent and Lancaster) there has been no serious attempt to create in Britain a collegial tradition in the mode of Oxbridge, but the federal principle has been widely emulated. This is not surprising in view of the sometimes expressed desire of founders to escape the collegial model, the sheer scale of the costs entailed to create it from scratch and, most significantly, as the North American institutions have found, the difficulty of finding a hospitable academic and social context (Duke, 1996). While in England the Universities of Bristol, Exeter, Durham and possibly York may occupy some of the same social space at Oxbridge, they have not developed either such close relationships to the leading fee-paying schools or established the same clear avenues to particular elevated niches in the labour market.

However, while the collegiate model of the university may be peculiar to Oxford and Cambridge, the collegial tradition has penetrated the British system of higher education at large, including to some degree even the new universities created by fiat of the state in the wake of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. Naturally, it has assumed somewhat different forms. The idea that universities are better governed if their academic affairs are controlled by the faculty has been widely accepted (even if it is now more fragile). Consequently, the senates, composed of academic representatives, have generally had the final say in controlling academic developments at most universities. In fact the University Grants Committee (UGC) invariably insisted upon measures of academic democracy before supporting a would-be-university's application to the Privy Council for a charter (Shinn, 1986, pp. 119–129). Similar moves were afoot as the polytechnics (the new universities) emerged and policy control was wrested from the local authorities (Pratt, 1997, pp. 277–282). Second, there is a widespread colloquial use of collegiality in higher education circles to describe – in approving terms – decision-making through a participative process of consensus building from the bottom upwards. Certainly there is a powerful belief that the academic enterprise, for example engagement in collaborative research, works best when there is a strong measure of teamwork. This may not be inconsistent with the presence of a formal hierarchy and designated

leadership roles but is based on the belief that such groups work most effectively if there is consultation, discussion and shared decision-making (empowerment in management jargon) rather than imposition from above.

The analysis so far has argued that the collegiate universities successfully survived the economic and political challenges that flowed out of the Industrial Revolution and that integral to that process of adjustment was the redevelopment of the collegial tradition. But at the very moment the tradition was taking root, it was being further threatened by new challenges: the emergence of science as a major area of intellectual endeavour, the intrusion of the state into the affairs of higher education on a permanent basis and the stirrings of that seemingly never-ending social revolution stimulated by the emancipation of women. Could the fledging new model of collegiality survive these challenges, and, if so, in what form?

Oxford, Cambridge and Two Models of the Collegial Tradition

In his *The Modern University and its Discontents*, Rothblatt maintains that a key development in the history of the modern university was the evolution of the 'federal principle' that, he asserts, could also be called the 'Cambridge principle' (1997a, pp. 233–238). For Rothblatt, intrinsic to the origins of the federal principle was the separation of teaching from examining, with the colleges assuming responsibility for the former and the university for the latter. The collegiate model of the university (the origins of which Rothblatt believes can be traced back to Merton College, Oxford or to King's Hall, later to become King's College, Cambridge) is organised on the basis of the federal principle. And yet a continuing theme in the historical research comparing modern Oxford to Cambridge – the two Universities after the era of Victorian reforms – is that Cambridge has a stronger and more independent centre than Oxford. Perhaps there is more than one understanding of federalism and change may represent a shift from one interpretation to another. In that case, it is necessary to think about the different functions of the centre (the universities) and the periphery (the colleges), the relative importance of their respective functions and when responsibilities are shared between them who has the most authority. In the subsequent analysis of the differences in the governance of Oxford and Cambridge, it is perhaps necessary, therefore, to think in terms of subtle differences in the distribution of authority rather than sharply contrasting models.

One of the major distinctions between the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge is Oxford's reputation for a tradition associated 'with the humanities, the church and politics' (Howarth, 1987, pp. 349–350) while Cambridge has been more closely identified with mathematics and the sciences – pure and applied. Howarth has argued that these distinctions emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century for prior to then there had been 'a thriving scientific counter-culture' in Oxford.

If Howarth's judgement is correct, this divergence was occurring as the refurbished collegial tradition was taking root. The obvious conundrum is how to account for it and, equally significantly, how to gauge its impact upon the development of the collegial tradition. Although Howarth lays some of the blame upon unfortunate

appointments to science chairs at Oxford, as well as the long-term cultural differences that stem from their historically contrasting intellectual traditions, she maintains that the crucial distinction was the level of institutional support that each university devoted to scientific development: 'In retrospect it seems that Oxford sciences missed out, above all, by failing to go for growth and to capitalise on the worldly and progressive ethos of the era of university reform' (Howarth, 1987, p. 367). In effect, Oxford allowed a golden opportunity to slip by. But how is this timidity to be explained? Howarth argues that because the growth of the sciences at Cambridge rested with its university rather than with its colleges it led to the creation of centralised science departments and the expansion of new departmental teaching posts.

Although the charge that Oxford's colleges were hostile to science was 'hotly disputed':

> Yet some Oxford scientists came to feel that the constitution that left them to the whims of the colleges was responsible not only for delaying the foundation of new chairs in physics, pure mathematics and engineering and restricting funds for laboratory-based appointments but also for diverting undergraduates away from the sciences.
>
> (Howarth, 1987, p. 357)

The implication of Howarth's own conclusion, but one that she has not drawn, is that there were individuals located in the colleges who saw the expansion of science as a threat, not only to their own personal careers and the endowment income of the colleges but also to the collegial tradition itself. This was a political struggle fuelled by cultural differences, centred around the idea of a liberal education and the need to sustain the colleges at the centre of teaching and learning in Oxford. The colleges had only recently wrested control of teaching from the private tutors and they could not be expected to stand idly by why it was snatched so swiftly from their grasp.

Support for this proposition is to be found in Morrell's history of the development of the sciences at Oxford in the inter-war years (Morrell, 1997). In a fascinating analysis Morrell argues that science tended to do well at Oxford during these years if it were small and inexpensive. Or, alternatively if its leading lights were prepared to spend large amounts of time seeking outside funding, they needed to become entrepreneurs to finance their departmental activities. Apparently the chemists were particularly adroit at manipulating the various demands: 'They taught their subject in the tutorial hour, using the standard techniques of essay-writing and discussion, as a vehicle of liberal education while not denying that chemistry had industrial applications' (Morrell, 1997, p. 439). Furthermore, those scientists who gained the most prestigious reputations within Oxford over-conformed to the stereotypical image of the colleges' arts don: 'Among college fellows Hinschelwood and Sidgwick stood out. The former's interests included comic verse, food, drink, classics and the visual arts, as well as reading Dante in the original in his college laboratory. Sidgwick, also a classical scholar, was renowned for pungent wit and generous hospitality' (Morrell, 1997, p. 438). During these inter-war years several of Oxford's science departments secured international research reputations but the undergraduates did not arrive in large numbers until post-1945. After the Second World War it was

more difficult for the Oxford colleges to resist the demands of science, including its competent, if mundane, practitioners as well as its brilliant, if eccentric, stars.

In what ways was science a potential threat to the emerging collegial tradition? Although colleges established laboratories, it made increasing sense for them to be provided centrally by the universities, or at the very least for colleges to share laboratory facilities. A scientific education was expensive and even the richer colleges soon developed doubts as their endowment income was swallowed up by the enormous costs of running laboratories. More money spent on laboratories meant less for other purposes including the fellows' share of endowment income. Furthermore, science – based upon lectures and experimental work in the laboratories – meant that the colleges lost control of a significant part of the teaching and learning process. In spite of the pedagogical creativity of Oxford's chemists, delightfully documented by Morrell, there was not the slightest possibility of covering an undergraduate scientific curriculum – even in the inter-war years – through college tutorials alone. Although not all scientists would be quite so scathing, R.E. Peierls (sometime Wykeham Professor of Theoretical Physics and Fellow of New College, University of Oxford), in his evidence to the Franks Commission, claimed that the tutorial system was wasteful of the time and energy of the science faculty, and the extent to which it held back the development of science was not outweighed by its 'possible benefits' to undergraduates (University of Oxford, 1965, Part IV, pp. 140–144).

Inasmuch as the scientific disciplines appeared to be imparting 'useful' knowledge, even practical skills, it could be said they were undermining the ethos of a liberal education. Precisely why this charge was not equally applicable to the training of lawyers and medics is hard to discern but, nonetheless, the sciences – especially the applied sciences – seemed to be part of an intellectual tradition that could not be readily fitted into the collegial tradition. The liberal tradition, centred around the idea of educating the gentlemanly scholar, tolerated the scientists as long as they gave the impression – as Hinschelwood and Sidgwick, amongst others, clearly did – that they conformed to the established model. But en masse the scientists were much more likely to impart the message that their mission was to turn out highly trained experts rather than gifted amateurs.

Besides considering the challenge to collegiality thrown up by the pedagogy of science, it is equally important to think about the relationship between the academic profession in science and the collegial tradition. The careers of college tutors were located in the colleges and evolved around their teaching; for the ambitious scientists they were centred in the laboratories and established upon their research, that is both their ability to secure funding for it and to have it publicly aired in the prestigious journals and at important conferences. Moreover, the training and organisational structure of the scientific segment of the academic profession was very different from that which college tutors traditionally experienced: obligatory postgraduate training, the desirability of a post-doctoral research post, undertaking research as part of a team, published research as integral to promotion and the clear academic hierarchies of scientific departments. All this was a very long way from the world of the old college arts don.

This is not to say that the science faculty would have scorned a college base, especially at a college like Trinity College, Cambridge, which besides the allure of its prestige and wealth had done a great deal to promote the interests of the scientific community within Cambridge. A college fellowship gave its holder a measure of status and offered tangible returns, although some individuals may well have felt that these were insufficient to balance its obligations. Moreover, it could be argued that the measure of a discipline's full acceptance within the collegiate universities was the willingness of the colleges to offer fellowships to its faculty. College fellowships were the badge that one had been accepted into the club, that one was a member of the inner magic circle. Both Oxford and Cambridge have been sensitive to the charge that many of their academics lack either a university or college base, that they do not wear 'the two hats' as the hallmark of the true Oxbridge tutorial fellow/university lecturer.

It is important to stress that the development of science within the collegiate universities should not be seen as instigating an immediate revolution. Heyck (1982, p. 94) has argued that the emergence of pure science was in many ways consistent with the established tradition of a liberal education. Moreover, for a considerable period of time mathematical physics was the dominant field for Cambridge physicists and in the second half of the nineteenth century ' . . . nearly half the chairs in physics in British universities were held by wranglers, men who had obtained first-class degrees in the Cambridge Mathematical Tripos' (Harman, 1985, p. 1). This changed only slowly with the establishment of the Natural Science Tripos (NST) at Cambridge and the foundation of its Cavendish laboratory, signifying the shift from mathematical to experimental physics. But in spite of these caveats, the emergence of science with its university base slowly but surely led to a key split within the academic labour force. For a significant segment of that labour force the colleges were either irrelevant to their careers or little more (unless they chose to make them otherwise) than a pleasing perk. For the arts dons the collegial tradition developed in a manner that encompassed their careers; for nearly all those serious about establishing scientific careers it had far less relevance and may have been viewed by some as a positive hindrance.

The expansion of science at Cambridge, therefore, placed an expanding number of dons in a different labour market situation from their arts colleagues: one group tied more to the University and the other to the colleges. The other key labour market consideration was the relationship between the liberal education the colleges imparted and the subsequent careers of their graduates. In spite of the alleged antipathy (Barnett, 1986; Wiener, 1985) between the entrepreneurial class and the British collegiate universities, Macleod and Moseley have claimed:

> However, by the 1870s, with the growing recognition of science as an occupation, and with new professional careers opening in scientific medicine, it could be argued that the NST Tripos was perceived as a route to a 'profitable' degree.
>
> (Macleod & Moseley, 1980, p. 183)

There was a recognition, at least in Cambridge, that industrialists were increasingly prepared to send their sons to University College, London, and later to the provincial university colleges, to receive a scientific education. And, of course,

Imperial College and the big civics were appearing on the horizon. There were, therefore, pressures within Cambridge to broaden its social base. There is some doubt as to whether this actually occurred, and Macleod and Moseley maintain that the expansion of science at Cambridge led to considerable 'lateral mobility': 'This lateral movement – away from the clergy towards medicine, away from land-owning and towards manufacturing and business families – was well underway by the late nineteenth century . . . By the 1890s, parents, headmasters and colleges increasingly saw the NST as an acceptable route to a professional career' (Macleod & Moseley, 1980, p. 189).

But, of course, the relationship between the development of science in the universities and the needs of the wider society has not been constructed around mere labour market considerations. Scientific research is the basis of many improvements in the productive process, indeed in the technological infrastructure of society at large, and investment is encouraged in the hope – not always realised – that it will have tangible pay-offs. It is no co-incidence that 1918 is the year from which the British universities received a recurrent grant from the Treasury and that the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) was created in 1916. As Tribe has written:

> Aircraft development and anti-submarine warfare had depended crucially on established university laboratories and research teams. By 1918 the more general argument was accepted that universities had a major part to play in the education of a future skilled labour force, as well as in the prosecution of strategic research.
>
> (Tribe, 1989, p. 15)

Furthermore, it was alleged that the German war effort had been better served by its universities. The British state wanted to ensure that in future higher education in Britain would be harnessed more closely to serving the national interest. H.A.L. Fisher, the President of the Board of Education, and sometime Fellow and subsequently Warden of New College, was very keen on the creation of the University Grants Committee (1919) to affirm his strong support for university autonomy (see the Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge Universities, 1992b, Appendix 4, 'Correspondence between the President of the Board of Education and the vice chancellors *re* grants of public money to the Universities'). However, the universities have come to learn over time that whoever pays the piper will, sooner or later, at least attempt to call the tune (Salter & Tapper, 1994, pp. 125–132). Whatever may or may not be left of university autonomy (Tapper & Salter, 1995), there can be little doubt that governments, regardless of their political persuasion, regard higher education as essentially an economic resource and have adopted various measures to steer universities to undertake research that has tangible economic pay-offs.

For the initial 2 years of the UGC's existence the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were not on its recurrent grant list. They were in receipt of annual grants from the Treasury while the Asquith Commission subjected them to yet another inquiry, in part to ascertain whether their circumstances were so straitened that they needed state funding. Not surprisingly, the Commission came to the conclusion that both Universities should be placed on the recurrent grant list. Neither University had sufficient resources to meet its legitimate aspirations since other sources of income were either unavailable (the colleges were also hard-pressed) or to tap

into them could have negative consequences (to increase fees would be unfair to poorer students). In the short run the state was the only viable provider, although the Commission remarked that 'the chief hope of the Universities in the future' was to increase their 'private benefaction'. And, in what can only be described as a classic example of wishful thinking, that the state grant should be seen as 'a stop-gap, not a solution to the problem of University poverty' (Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge Universities, 1922a, pp. 53, 55).

The 1922 Asquith Commission was, therefore, a critical stage in the process that tied Oxbridge to the financial apron-strings of the state, with all its long-term and widely felt ramifications. Moreover, in reading the Commission's Report, it is impossible not to be struck by the fact that it is the demands of science, above all else, that necessitate the infusion of a tranche of state monies if the two Universities are not to be bankrupt. Some of the most forthright evidence to the Commission was presented by various groups of scientists pleading dire poverty, and when the two Universities were asked to detail their specific requirements most were for advances in science, which would consume the bulk of the state grant. Moreover, there is a strong sub-theme in the Report that scientific research in particular needed more resources. It is not unreasonable to argue, therefore, that there was a close link between the expansion of the scientific base of the two Universities and the intrusion of the state. This expansion of science presented the collegial tradition, from its very inception, with its most serious challenge; a challenge that was later to be underwritten by the state, interested in realising the economic potential of scientific research. At the same time the two Universities, and more especially Cambridge, were responding to what Macleod and Moseley have termed the pressures of 'lateral mobility' as the sons of the bourgeoisie started to move out of declining economic sectors (such as the clergy) into those parts of the labour market that were expanding.

The clear implication of the above argument is that because Cambridge, especially with respect to undergraduate teaching, responded more swiftly to the demands of science – and, very critically, responded through the University rather than through the colleges – it was the first to readjust its understanding of the collegial tradition that had emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Indeed it could be argued, as Howarth's analysis of the expansion of science at Cambridge has implied, that the manner in which Cambridge responded to the pressures for reform led at the very outset to a different collegial tradition from Oxford's. Perhaps this is why Rothblatt claims that Cambridge, rather than Oxford, gave the federal principle to the university world. In what ways specifically is the collegial tradition different at Cambridge that would lead one to believe that its structures and procedures conform more closely than Oxford's to the federal principle? Can we provide some substance to the argument?

The key difference between the development of science at the two universities is that at Cambridge the University led the way, at Oxford it was the colleges. As the Asquith Commission pointed out:

> At Cambridge it has been found advisable gradually to abolish the college laboratories altogether, and to concentrate the practical instruction entirely in the University laboratories.
> (Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge Universities, 1922a, p. 115)

Whereas the college laboratories were retained much longer in Oxford:

> . . .. because there has been a strong feeling in favour of retaining the tutorial system in science as in other subjects, and the colleges have regarded it as their duty to supply such tuition themselves.
> (Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge Universities, 1922a, p. 118)

The Asquith Commission recommended that Oxford should follow Cambridge's lead, a move strongly supported within Oxford by its Board of the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Hence, although throughout most of the twentieth century the organisation of science has been placed on a similar basis at the two universities, there were critical differences in the early years.

The consequence of organising science through the University rather than the colleges is that Cambridge inevitably has had a stronger centre. If one is thinking in terms of a federal model, then the balance of the periphery and centre is weighed more in favour of the former at Oxford and the latter at Cambridge. The University at Cambridge had a higher fee income from students; it owned more property, which naturally it would be responsible for administering; and, most importantly, it would – through its faculty boards – be responsible for controlling a significantly larger percentage of the undergraduate curriculum.

However, perhaps the most vital difference concerns the historical evolution of academic contracts. At Cambridge the University employs and pays the wages of most of the core faculty members. While colleges may offer these individuals fellowships and some financial rewards for college teaching in addition to the usual range of college perks, they do not meet the bulk of the salary bill. There will also be college fellows at Cambridge whose salaries are paid by the colleges, but they do not have an additional university base with its attendant responsibilities and rewards. The situation at Oxford is very different. In recent years most of Oxford's core faculty have had two contracts: one from the colleges and one from the University, with each party responsible for paying differing proportions of the tutor's salary. Usually the colleges have paid one-third of the salary of a university lecturer with the University paying two-thirds; with the proportions reversed for the Common University Fund (CUF) lecturers. As one would expect most of the university lectureships have been in the sciences with most of the CUF lecturers in the arts subjects. But, critically, the result is that many core faculty have had two employers requiring them to fulfil formal obligations for both their college and the University.

The use of descriptive labels such as 'federal' or 'confederal' requires judgements to be made on the basis of specified criteria and the relevant evidence. If it assumed, as we have done in this chapter, that the collegial tradition emerged within Oxbridge as a result of the protracted process of reform that was put into effect

in the latter half of the nineteenth century, then almost from the very beginning the increasing intrusion of science into the affairs of the two universities strongly influenced how that tradition would emerge. If one believes that the presence of a relatively independent centre is a key characteristic of any model of federalism then Cambridge moved closer than Oxford towards creating a federal model in terms of the relationship between the University and its colleges. Conversely, however, it could be argued that because of the powerful tradition of dual appointments at Oxford, with an inevitable intimate intermingling of centre and periphery, then Oxford has come closer to constructing a federal model of higher education. While there is no real mileage to be gained in making categorical assertions, it is important, however, to note the impact of the organisational needs of science, its strong emphasis upon research, its production of intellectual capital that is perceived as being of particular importance for economic development, its training of highly valued recruits for the labour market and its apparent need for ever-increasing amounts of state income to finance its activities. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that the expansion of science was a response to wider societal pressures: the changing demands of the labour market and the perceived impact of scientific research upon the nation's technological infrastructure and thus its potential economic advance. Science may be an intellectual pursuit but it has to be organised and paid for.

Interpreting Change

If, in order to sustain their relevance, institutions must adapt to meet new social demands, does it really matter if they retain the same labels to describe themselves? If the stakes are survival then perhaps it is permissible to use the camouflage of language to ensure a smoother process of institutional transmission. While this may be meaningful in a political sense, two problems remain. Descriptive subterfuge could disguise the fact that something of great value may be in the process of disappearing while individuals are lulled into a false sense of security, unaware of the enormity of the underlying changes. Secondly, we could arrive at a situation in which our descriptive labels have no intrinsic meaning, thus enabling each individual to define them according to personal interests. If the collegial tradition has no intrinsic meaning then perhaps there is nothing to defend other than that which each of us finds agreeable.

Interestingly, the several set-piece attempts to reform Oxford and Cambridge have invariably asserted that it is their avowed intention to preserve both institutions as collegiate universities. Reforms may be necessary but the purpose is to preserve, indeed enhance, collegiality. For example, prior to the publication of its Report, Oxford's very contemporary North Commission set out its central working assumptions. The third of these was:

> …. The Commission assumes that Oxford will continue to be a collegiate university. Colleges will continue to be legally independent bodies. They will continue to admit and

> teach undergraduates, provide for graduate students and support research. They will continue to provide residential and social facilities for their junior members, and have primary responsibility for their pastoral care. The colleges represent one of Oxford's great strengths and the Commission assumes that a primary objective must be to build on this for the future.
>
> (University of Oxford, 1996, p. 7)

In a similar vein, the University of Cambridge in the 1989 Wass Report pledged its commitment to sustain a key component of its avowed values: 'It [the University of Cambridge] must also remain, as it is now, a self-governing community of scholars. Our recommendations, which are to be seen as an integrated whole, are designed to satisfy these two fundamental requirements' [the other requirement being the efficient conduct of University business] (University of Cambridge, 1989, p. 616). It is not our intention at this stage of the book to reflect on whether either the North Commission or the Wass Syndicate achieved their goals, but rather to make the point that would-be-reformers must be wary of explicitly challenging core values. However, it is reasonable to ponder whether it is wise to assume that core values can always be reconciled to new demands or to make the point that perhaps hard choices have to made and priorities established. Moreover, while it would be absurd to have demanded of the North Commission a detailed understanding of what it actually meant by a collegiate university, its attempt at minimal elaboration was hardly reassuring and compares unfavourably with the more sophisticated analysis found in both the 1922 Asquith and 1966 Franks Reports. Invariably in official enquiries the commitments entered into are very broad in scope but as all reformers know the devil is always in the detail.

If the collegial tradition needs to be reformed then how should the change process unfold? On this point there appears to be a wide measure of agreement and the quotations extracted from the Wass Syndicate and the North Commission provide a highly convenient analytical starting point. Invariably there is a perception that the collegial tradition should be required to change only gradually. Its central values are so precious and fragile that precipitate action could damage them irreparably. This is an organic process of change in which the traditions of the past are built upon rather than swept away. Such sentiments were beautifully expressed at the beginning of the twentieth century by one of Oxford's more reforming Chancellors, Lord Curzon:

> We may learn, however, from the experience of previous Commissions that successful reform at Oxford has almost invariably originated in reconstruction rather than destruction; and that the institutions which last the longest and work the best are those which have been erected on older foundations, or, under skilful treatment, have assumed fresh and more harmonious shapes.
>
> (Curzon, 1909, p. 211)

As if in genuflection to such an august view, both the internal and external exponents for change at Oxbridge have invariably moved cautiously. For example, the reforming parliamentary appointed commissions were composed essentially of sympathetic insiders, their reports resulted in the appointment of statutory commissioners also well-versed in the ways of the two universities and it was the practice to invite the Universities and their colleges to propose their own statutory reforms

rather than impose upon them the views of the commissioners. Although, ultimately, all the parties may have been subject to the sovereignty of parliament, this was hardly the behaviour of an authoritarian state bent upon cleansing the Augean stables. However, to paraphrase Curzon, if the best change is that which builds upon the past, then surely the change process itself should unfold organically from within rather than be brought to fruition by external intervention?

Besides proceeding gradually the actual process of change has also followed a widely agreed line of analysis. The change process centres around the way in which the external pressures are translated internally into those practices, which enable the collegiate universities to meet new social needs. Thus change is the interaction of those parties integral to the collegiate universities (the array of internal interests) with the external institutions and organised groups. This way of thinking about educational change is parallel to the analysis elaborated by M.S. Archer in her seminal work, *Social Origins of Educational Systems* (1979). The change process has to be understood as a complex pluralist struggle with the interested internal parties using their various resources (status, wealth and power) to achieve the outcomes they desire. But this struggle is contained within a context over which these actors may have little control: that is the structure and processes of state and society constantly reshaped by the dynamics of social, economic and political change.

But it would be misleading to see the pressures as essentially external to the collegiate university with the process of change emerging out of the interaction of internal and external interests. Some of the most persistent and powerful demands for change have arisen from within the collegial tradition itself. Indeed, a reasonable interpretation of the nineteenth century reform movements at both Oxford and Cambridge is that internal dissidents, aware of their inability to reform substantially either University from within, turned to Parliament in the hope that it would do the job for them. From this perspective the forces for change were essentially internal to the two ancient universities with the external political institutions providing the essential enabling leverage.

The internal reform pressures can be seen as emerging out of the evolving social demography of collegial institutions, with the possibility that particular individuals – for example politically sophisticated heads of colleges who have a mind for change – possess the potential to exercise great influence. Such individuals might be finely attuned to the nature of the external pressures, even anticipating them. In this situation it is possible that the pattern of change could be less radical and more accommodating of established interests. Likewise, there may be individuals who anticipate the tenor of the times and have the power, at least in the short run, to ensure institutional resistance. But the internal change dynamic is likely to be more closely associated with a shifting socio-political demographic map rather than individual inputs. In this model it is important to think of the changing balance of key internal variables: newly appointed, as opposed to long-serving, tutors; collegial insiders versus those who have experienced different forms of higher education; the gender balance of students and of dons; and the pattern of academic allegiances (either to the college or to the university, or to different disciplines). In comparatively small institutions, and the governing bodies of some colleges are not

especially large (some as small as 25, few over 50), minor shifts in the institutional social fabric could usher in major changes in a short space of time. To the outside world the appearance may be of timeless institutional behaviour, but the replacement of one critical brick could cause the dam to burst.

Institutional change can be analysed along two main tracks. The first is to identify the particular pressures that have initiated a specific change. This is essentially a descriptive approach to understanding the origins of the change process: the identification of a number of precise factors generated in defined historical circumstances that relate to individual reform initiatives. An excellent example of this approach would be to answer the question why so many of the men's college at both Oxford and Cambridge were in such an unseemly haste to admit women in the mid-1970s. The issue is specific, the time period defined and the pressures could be enumerated: the wish to appear as a liberally inclined college; the desire to attract a more intellectually motivated undergraduate student, intake; the hope that it would improve the college's examination performance vis-à-vis other colleges; and the fear of losing male applicants if the college continued to resist the entry of women.

A more demanding, and contentious, approach is to argue that there is a fundamental logic to the change process, that the pressures for change emerge directly out of the wider society's socio-economic development. While much of this book will be built around what we have called the commonsense approach to understanding change within the collegial tradition, we also believe that an overall dynamic to that change process can be built upon two key interrelated assumptions. First, there is an in-built institutional desire to survive: although institutions may at times severely misjudge their best long-term interests, once they recognise a viable course of action invariably they will follow it even if it should necessitate their jettisoning deeply entrenched values and practices. Ultimately institutional behaviour is driven by the will to ensure institutional survival. Second, the societal needs to which educational institutions have to respond are generated essentially by an interactive combination of economic and political pressures. In more precise terms this takes three main forms: the need to respond to a changing labour market, including new social relations of production (thus, education and training); the need to enhance the technical relations of production (thus, research and transferable knowledge); and the need to fulfil politically inspired social goals (e.g. the widening participation agenda). Not surprisingly differing theoretical positions – functionalist, Marxist and Weberian – can draw sustenance from the same dynamics of change, with the difference between them drawn very much in terms of the conflicting perceptions of whose – or what – interests are being served.

Conclusions

While it is easy to enumerate the various pressures for change that have been brought to bear upon the collegial tradition, it is more difficult to assert that those pressures are underwritten by one central dynamic. Historically higher education has performed two key social purposes: it provides an experience of education that

enables those who receive it to enter certain sectors of the labour market (its labour market function) and it transmits and builds upon the established body of intellectual capital (its production of ideas, which in the twentieth century has centred around the expansion of scientific research). Central to this chapter has been the argument that continuity and change in the collegial tradition have been driven by pressures to restructure how these two key functions are performed. Furthermore, although increasingly changes to these functions may be closely associated with national economic needs, invariably it has been the state that has acted as the handmaiden of change, which in the twentieth century has been underwritten by the financial dependence of higher education upon the Treasury. In other words, although there may be direct pressure upon higher education from economic interests (e.g. in the nineteenth century the creation of alternative models to the collegiate university underwritten in part by successful local businessmen), that pressure has increasingly been exercised through the state, which, in turn, interacts upon a range of interests internal to the higher education system.

In this chapter we have argued that the classic model of the collegial tradition emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It was a model of higher education, centred upon the ancient English collegiate universities, that represented an accommodation of past traditions and the growing political dominance of the bourgeoisie. In the process colleges that had served the interests of the established church became first and foremost self-governing educational institutions. A key ingredient in this development was the symbiotic relationship between the career interests of the college tutors and the labour market aspirations of the colleges' undergraduates. The careers of the former were built around their ability to provide a form of higher education, a liberal education, that enabled the latter to pursue – broadly defined – professional careers.

The Oxford collegial tradition thus formulated was a male construct, centred essentially upon arts subjects (note the number of students reading Literae Humaniores – the Classics – expanded in late nineteenth century Oxford) and enshrined in the notion of collegiate autonomy – nothing could be changed unless approved by dons in their individual colleges and dons en masse in the University. Almost from its inception the tradition was challenged by the introduction of the sciences, increasingly financed by the state. Such pressures emerged in the context of the changing needs of the wider society: the economy required differing kinds of labour skills and scientific research assumed an increasing importance in the functioning of a technologically driven society. In a comparatively short space of time such research became the dominant form of intellectual capital in western industrialised societies.

Obviously the collegial tradition could not remain static as it adjusted to these pressures, but it appears to have accommodated them, albeit in a different fashion, at both Oxford and Cambridge in a form that has retained a reasonably cogent identity. And, moreover, the idea of collegiality as self-governing *academic demos* – thanks in part to the sponsorship of the UGC – spread throughout the system of higher education at large (Shinn, 1986, pp. 119–129). Science may need the laboratory and the lecture hall but there was no reason why the tutorial system, suitably adapted,

could not prove a useful additional teaching adjunct. Moreover, colleges through the creation of junior fellowships and granting their fellows paid sabbatical leave could assist in the development of research. If it was important for the professions to be incorporated within the collegial tradition, then it was equally significant for the scientists. It is far easier to colonise existing status systems than to create your own, especially when they have such a long head-start, wide appeal and apparent vitality. In the meantime, that is between roughly 1919 and 1979, the state picked up an increasing percentage of the costs, raised a number of questions about the efficiency of the university system at large, but made few explicit demands.

Its past flexibility suggests that the collegial tradition should be able to adjust to contemporary pressures and yet retain its core identity. There are, however, two critical developments that make such an outcome problematic (for a detailed analysis of the challenges emerging from state and society to which the collegial tradition is currently exposed, see Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 39–55). First, the nature of the academic profession is changing in ways that weaken its allegiance to collegiality. It is becoming ever more specialised, hierarchical and committed to research over teaching. In the process the institutional allegiances of academics are becoming more pragmatic (e.g. more dependent upon the willingness of departments to provide supportive research facilities), and thus potentially more tenuous. While academics may retain a college base, whether it has much significance where it really counts, that is its relevance for the development of their careers, is an entirely different matter. What we are suggesting is the possibility of a greater fragmentation within the core faculty itself with the prospect that declining numbers will continue to wear two hats. Within this scenario college teaching could represent an alternative career line for those who are not research active. Of course, colleges have acted to support research but to what extent such moves can bridge the growing fragmentation of the academic profession is open to question. In the past an Oxbridge career was seen as the pinnacle of the academic profession. Perhaps this will become less true with the demands of collegiality, both college teaching and commitment to college affairs, repelling – rather than attracting – talented and ambitious academics.

Second, and equally significant, is the seemingly negative attitude of the state towards Oxbridge's 'exceptionalism'. While there is official support for differentiation in higher education, it is problematic whether it goes so far as to sustain the collegial tradition as we have come to understand it. Furthermore, the state's embracing of a mass model of higher education has encouraged wider developments within both the academic profession and higher education institutions that have not left Oxbridge unscathed: more formal internal status hierarchies, greater differentiation of financial rewards, a clearer separation of the various academic roles with some seen as more worthy than others and a sharper distinction between all roles – academic and otherwise (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010). Moreover, successive governments have imposed upon the universities a more embracing policy framework that does not encourage institutional distinctiveness, but rather results in a greater diversity of outputs in relation to a common set of prescribed goals – the assessment

of research, the measurement of the quality of the teaching, the pressures to achieve a more socially diverse intake of undergraduate students (the widening participation agenda) and the advocacy of a particular model of what constitutes good governance. The question is whether the collegial tradition can respond to these demands in a manner that enables it to retain its integrity.

Chapter 4
Commensality: Time and Space, Port and Sport, Code and Dress

The chief characteristic of this set was the most reckless extravagance of every kind. London wine merchants furnished them with liqueurs at a guinea a bottle, and wine at five guineas a dozen: Oxford and London tailors vied with one another in providing them with unheard of quantities of the most gorgeous clothing. They drove tandems in all directions, scattering their ample allowances, which they treated as pocket money, about roadside inns and Oxford taverns with an open hand, and 'going tick' for everything which could by possibility be booked. Their cigars cost two guineas a pound; their furniture was the best that could be bought; pine apples, forced fruit, and the most rare preserves figured at their wine parties; they hunted, rode steeple chases by day, played billiards until the gates closed, and then were ready for vingt-et-une, unlimited loo, and hot drink in their own rooms, as long as anyone could be got to sit up and play.

(Thomas Hughes, 1861)

Oxford is liverish, pompous and pedagogic. . . sticky in its sanctimoniousness; clammy in its smugness. . . North Oxford glistens with superiority. . . more black looks on buses on the Banbury Road than on any other bus route in Britain. Class consciousness lies in thick layers between Summertown and Carfax. . . much backbiting and intensive gossip. . . a perpetual process of post-mortems on private reputations. . . Rumour is Oxford's vital breath. . . I prefer Wigan. . .

(J. G. Sinclair, 1931)

Introduction

Commensality is Halsey's intriguing word. He ponders, 'Will commensality survive and, if so, with what further modifications'? (1995, p. 174) But the reader may well reasonably ask, 'What is 'commensality'? The *OED* defines the noun 'commensal' as: '(one) who eats at the same table; (animal or plant) living harmlessly with or in another and thus obtaining food . . .'

So, the college is a community with commensality for the dons consisting today mainly of shared lunching and dining (the Oxford jargon is 'Commons', or

T. Tapper, D. Palfreyman, *Oxford, the Collegiate University*, Higher Education Dynamics 34, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0047-5_4,

'Common Table', for lunch and 'High Table' for dinner). For the undergraduates (significantly, 'Junior Members') commensality is about the whole experience of 'living-in' college rooms, with the shared meals and the team sports. Some dons and junior members may also share the experience of chapel but the days when attendance was compulsory for both, thus forming an integral part of commensality, have long gone. Nonetheless, the image of closely knit communities sharing arcane rituals still continues to be part of the Oxbridge image. Whether all this is harmless may be debatable given the alarmingly high murder rates of the college crime novels! Evidently, too much commensality can breed fierce hatreds as well as lasting friendships.

Nonetheless, it is this commensality arising from shared living that Newman so valued, far above anything that the University could possibly give its students:

> I protest to you, Gentlemen, that if I have to choose between a so-called University, which dispensed with residence and tutorial superintendence, and gave its degrees to any person who passed an examination in a wide range of subjects, and a University which had no professors or examinations at all, but merely brought a number of young men together for 3 or 4 years . . . if I were asked which of these two methods was the better discipline of the intellect . . . which of the two courses was the more successful in training, moulding, enlarging the mind, which sent out men the more fitted for their secular duties, which produced better public men, men of the world, men whose names would be descent to posterity, I have no hesitation in giving the preference to that University which did nothing, over that which exacted of its members an acquaintance with every science under the sun.
>
> (Newman, 1959, p. 165)

Such sentiments may have sounded perfectly reasonable in Newman's day and age, but it is hard to imagine that even amongst its staunchest admirers commensality so interpreted would retain much allegiance today.

At the conclusion to Chapter 2 we asked whether the costs of collegiality within the Oxbridge colleges are still affordable. Commensality has a price: whether in terms of the financial cost (the expenditure required to provide 'Commons' and 'High Table') or the cost in time; even if lunches can be brief, dinners may be lengthy. Moreover, is the collegiate style of commensality suited to students' tastes in an era of 'fast and junk-food', even if they can afford the costs of 'living-in'? If, in due course, British students will be required to pay their own academic fees at anywhere near the economic cost, will they want to pay a likely premium over other elite UK universities in order to experience collegiality in all its forms including commensality? Moreover, how many science dons have time to escape the laboratory and walk or cycle to college at lunchtime, even if the food is free?

In this chapter, drawing upon a strong Anglo-American comparative perspective (see also Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 113–133), we explore what collegiality means with special reference to its physical representation (the college buildings, notably 'the quadrangle') and to the use of its space (the key components of those buildings, including 'the staircase'). Along with these physical representations there are the social manifestations of collegiality by way of shared lunch/dinner/the 'gaude' and college 'feasts', and the sense of identity that emerges from playing competitive team sports. The colleges play rugby or football in leagues ('cuppers')

and row against each other on the *Isis* (the River Thames as it flows through the City) at 'Torpids' and during 'Eights' – rowing competitions in the Spring ('Hilary') and Summer ('Trinity') terms. The use of the jargon illustrates commensality as a shared language, as Oxford-speak, as a code known to insiders. There is also commensality as special dress: the wearing of 'gowns' for 'Hall' and for 'High Table', for meetings of 'Governing Body' and when a 'Junior Member' is summoned to see the 'Head of House'. The Oxford shops are full of T-shirts, tracksuits, sweatshirts, umbrellas, fleeces and, of course, the more traditional scarves, ties and cuff links, all in college colours, carrying the college name and college crest. Are these really purchased by the dons and junior members to reinforce their college identity and display their college loyalty? Or are they sold mainly to nostalgic 'Old Members' (alumni) either for similar reasons or because they are anxious to display 'the college tie' as they 'network' in 'the real world'? Or might they be sold only to tourists, keen to take a little bit of Oxford or Cambridge away with them? Have they been captivated by the seductiveness of collegiality, wanting to share vicariously the magic and participate in the myth?

'The Collegiate Way': Lessons from Duke's 'Importing Oxbridge'

Frederick Rudolf, in his masterful history of the American college, describes how 'the collegiate way' was imported into the United States from Oxbridge, often amidst somewhat extravagant claims for its efficacy, before being substantially eclipsed in the twentieth century by 'the university movement' and 'university ideals' based on the German (Humboldt) model of the university. Despite a brief revival in the 1920s, and occasional experiments with 'the old collegiate values', it has never regained its former eminence. Yet this perpetual American dalliance with collegiality has much to tell us about its nature.

For Rudolph: 'The collegiate way is the notion that a curriculum, a library, a faculty, and students, are not enough to make a college. It is adherence to the residential scheme of things. It is respectful of quite rural settings, dependent on dormitories, committed to dining halls, permeated by paternalism. It is what every American college has had or consciously rejected or lost or sought to recapture' (1990, p. 87). He uses an 1870 quote from the University of Rochester's student newspaper in support of his argument: 'It seems to us that the greatest need of our university is that of dormitories, since without them we can never enjoy a decent supply of that delightful article, vaguely called *college spirit* . . . the absence of dormitories . . . deprives us of all those delightful associations and those lifelong friendships which add so much to the glory of college days, and which, after all, are the only things to which students love to revert in after years' (1990, p. 100). And that the alumni do indeed define their college days from such memories is demonstrated by this reference to: 'A Princeton alumnus, searching in 1914 for some way to define the Princeton spirit, decided that he could best convey his meaning by describing Princeton as a place

"Where each man . . . may enter dozens of rooms whose doors are never locked nor their tobacco jars empty"' (1990, p. 86).

It is unlikely that the contemporary US fraternity-sorority provides the commensality experienced by this romanticised ideal of 'the collegiate way' or captures the current Oxbridge experience of 'living-in' college, just as residing in a study-bedroom on a corridor in a hall of residence within a UK civic or campus university is also not quite the same as occupying *rooms* (typically a study and bedroom, a *set*) on a staircase in, say, an Oxford college quadrangle. Moreover, the typical British undergraduate is less likely to reside in university accommodation for more than his/her first year, compared with the trend towards Oxbridge undergraduates having college accommodation for all 3 or 4 years of their studies.

Alex Duke in *Importing Oxbridge: English Residential Colleges and American Universities* (1996) explores how various American educators have tried to transplant the structure and organisation of Oxbridge colleges as a solution for perceived deficiencies in US universities. The intention was to re-arrange undergraduate life within increasingly large, impersonal and research-oriented universities around small academic communities modelled on the Oxbridge residential college. Sadly, none of these experiments met the expectations of their proponents, not least because they depended on trite and romanticised notions of life and work in Oxford and Cambridge. As Duke comments:

> Those who champion the residential college idea in America generally did not base their understanding of Oxbridge on scholarly or even systematic study of the development of the two universities. Instead, they gleaned what was necessary to support their vision from popular notions and personal observations of Oxford and Cambridge, while ignoring or disregarding inconsistencies or contradictions. . . The organisational sagas put forward most often by denizens of Oxford and Cambridge – usually in the form of house histories, personal reminiscences, and fictionalised accounts of college life – offered a picture of slow change, ignoring or underplaying the dramatic changes that periodically affected both universities. The distorted view presented to American visitors suggested that the residential college was a stable, time-tested unit of academic organisation whose adaptation to American institutions might remedy the problems associated with increased institutional size and the research orientation of faculty.
>
> (Duke, 1996, pp. 7–8)

This is not to say that institutional values and structures cannot be transplanted, but that there needs to be acute awareness of what is being transplanted and how it can be modified to empathise with its new social environment.

Of course it is not just Americans who like to create these Oxbridge 'organisational sagas'. Even in contemporary Britain: 'Their dreaming spires and gothic pinnacles, their gilded youth and bibulous dons, provide the myths for television series, thrillers or tabloid headlines' (Sampson, 1992, p. 98). Perhaps the British parallel to the American importation of Oxbridge is seen in those civic universities trying to replicate Oxbridge colleges in their halls of residence or those 1960s' foundations introducing, albeit in a very truncated form, the collegiate model (York, Lancaster, Kent). In neither case did the preconditions exist for the creation of any meaningful sense of collegiality (although the judgement would be more equivocal with respect to the University of Durham's colleges – see Tapper & Palfreyman,

2010, pp. 59–74) and, most decidedly, no government was prepared to provide the resources to make this a real possibility.

So, the Newmanesque and Arnoldian fixation with 'the Whole Man' and 'the Gentleman Scholar' was carried across the Atlantic. In 1911 Charles Thwing, President of Western Reserve University, claimed that the 'talk of the Common Room, the intimacies of the Breakfast and Luncheon, the pulling of oars of the same boat, constant and intimate associations represent forces and conditions which help to make men' (as quoted in Duke, 1996, p. 45). At the same time the Gothic Revival architectural style also arrived in America, just as did literature about life in the English universities, notably John Corbin's *An American at Oxford*, 1902. All this was helped by the flow of Rhodes Scholars – 13 of whom became Presidents of US colleges or universities between 1902 and 1946.

However, the contrast between the romanticised Oxbridge tradition and the emerging elite American research universities was stark: 'If the American research university was recent, revolutionary, bureaucratic, and impersonal, the English college was ancient, intimate, and, in the best Whig tradition, the product of an inevitable march forward. If the product of the teutonized American university of the present was an expert and a specialist, the product of the anglicised university of the near future would once more be a gentleman and scholar' (Duke, 1996, p. 63).

Hence, in the 1890s and the 1900s *unsuccessful* efforts were made to establish Oxbridge-style residential colleges at Harvard, the University of Chicago and at Princeton. Critics of the experiment at Harvard noted: 'The English system not only sub-divides the students, but the teachers; not only makes colleges, but dissolves the university', and 'to listen to its advocates one would suppose that Macaulay and Gladstone. . . could never have amounted to anything had they not eaten Dinner in Hall'! (Thayer, as quoted in Duke, 1996, pp. 72–73) On the other hand Woodrow Wilson, President at Princeton, was particularly infatuated with Oxford, writing to his wife: 'Oxford is enough to take one's heart by storm. . . I am afraid that if there were a place for me here, America would only see me again to sell the house, to fetch you and the children' (as quoted in Duke, 1996, p. 82). But infatuation, even the infatuation of a future American president, is not a sound basis for social experiments.

All three experiments largely foundered on the expense of creating the residential college system, not helped by the fact that: 'In all three cases Oxford was viewed through the lenses of Arnold and Newman, whether interpreted by Corbin or Wilson. Occasional visits to Oxford did not clarify anyone's vision. . .' (Duke, 1996, p. 88). With an evident sense of irony, if not complete justice to the facts, one commentator remarked towards the end of this period of experimentation (1910) that the 'Particular thing we are most anxious to get from Oxford and Cambridge, their residential colleges, is what reformers in these universities are most anxious to break up'! (as quoted in Duke, 1996, p. 89)

In the 1930s the Harkness Bequests permitted yet a further experiment: the foundation of the Harvard Houses and the Yale Colleges, intended to foster a coherent social life in what had become increasingly larger universities that were primarily

non-residential. And yet again, there were critics of what was seen by some as an inappropriate reverence towards the Oxbridge tutorial system. Tellingly, the Quadrangle Plan at Yale was dismissed as an attempt to 'ape the natural evolution of seven centuries at Oxford by a revolution of 7 years at Yale. It is a wish to give modern colleges a varnish of that ivied loftiness and social sanctity native to the ancient English institutions. It is akin to the average American's abject obeisance to visiting European Royalty or to the mid-western grocery salesman's urge to be a Knight Templar' (Hale, as quoted in Duke, 1996, p. 113). Equally scathingly another critic noted: '. . . this tends to nourish the idea that a tutorial is ringed with tobacco smoke and incubates "personal contact". . . there is no activity. . . except puffing at a pipe, and yet somehow at the end of 4 years an enormous amount of something valuable has been conveyed to the student. . . this view is propagated so widely that one is tempted to ask why the Pullman smoker has not been accepted as the school for American youth' (as quoted in Duke, 1996, p. 98).

However, the Harvard and Yale buildings included common rooms, dining halls, accommodation for resident faculty and masters, with en-suite bathrooms at Harvard but shared facilities at Yale. And one notes with interest that the English civic universities were building Halls of Residence along very similar lines at much the same time (e.g. Derby Hall at the University of Liverpool – but certainly without the en-suite facilities!). In effect Harvard and Yale were creating upmarket halls of residence, not Oxbridge colleges.

Although it was to be expected that the East Coast Ivy League universities would be attracted to the Oxbridge collegial tradition, the ideal also had its appeal as far west as in California. Claremont was perceived as the 'Oxford plan of the Pacific' but Duke claims that: 'Claremont's planners examined the English residential college system in a detailed way only *after* they had committed themselves to imitate it. . .' (1996, p. 137). Not surprisingly the experiment was again unsuccessful and by 1939 'the Claremont Colleges receded into the main stream of American Higher Education' (1996, p. 138). But the allure of Oxbridge did not vanish in California and in the 1960s a residential college-based campus was developed at Santa Cruz at much the same time that York, Kent and Lancaster were experimenting with their own collegiate models. Santa Cruz was backed by Clark Kerr, the President of the University of California, who believed that as far as undergraduate education was concerned 'any university could aim no higher than to be as British as possible' (as quoted in Duke, 1996, p. 152). And by British he apparently meant Oxbridge!

Karl A. Lamb, in an article entitled *Seeking the Essence of Oxford* in the *American Oxonian* (where else indeed!), described the Santa Cruz plan in this way:

> The Oxford college is a functioning community small enough for every student to be known and taught as an individual, assuring him a home and an identity, yet surrounded by a larger community of rich activities and resources which the student may sample at his own pace and in his own way. This achievement of Oxford will be an energizing motive of the Santa Cruz colleges. Each will have its own courtyards, faculty, and instructional program. Each will have its own architectural style and will be free to develop its own traditions,

> mode of life, and special interests. Just as the emphasis in instruction will be on seminars and tutorials which make the student a participant in intellectual enterprise, rather than an observer, the emphasis in extra-curricular activities will be on broad participation within each college, rather than semi-professional campus-wide organizations. Each college, for example, will have facilities for amateur theatricals, each will have its own athletic teams.
>
> (Lamb, 1964, April)

And the future would remain bright even as the student population expanded:

> The purpose of each college will be no less than to assure for each of its undergraduate members an education of human scale and a sense of membership in a significant intellectual community, even when the campus grows to a student population of 27,000 . . . The colleges will vary in number of student members from perhaps 250 to 800. Each will have physical facilities not unlike those of an Oxford College, except that Santa Cruz will have more bathrooms and no chapels.
>
> (Lamb, 1964, April)

Fortunately, Lamb was sufficiently reflective to realise that this 'academic idyll' might not work in the American context and that the Californian taxpayers could gibe at its costs.

The Santa Cruz experiment has had a mixed history (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 119–121), and some 30 years on Duke believes that its overall record provides 'yet another example of how the pervasiveness of the Oxbridge residential college fuelled a disappointing attempt at academic innovation' (1996, p. 170). The central message of his book is of the need to put 'to rest a century-old fixation with recreating Oxford in America' in order to 'allow educators the freedom to explore more original – and potentially more successful – ways to broaden the experience of undergraduates beyond the classroom' (1996, p. 175). In this Duke may be disillusioned for in the 1990s the University of Oxford and its colleges had several fact-finding delegations from both American and Canadian institutions seeking to find the secret to creating a superior 'student experience' to be sold (naturally!) at a premium price. The seductiveness of the collegiate myth still lures academics from afar, just as, to the advantage of college coffers, American students now flock to spend a Junior Year Abroad as Visiting Students in Oxford and American graduates sign on for Masters courses.

But not all are captivated by the reality, as opposed to the myth, of Oxford. Ehrenreich for one was truly disenchanted by her perceived inefficiency of the University of Oxford and the allegedly eccentric commensality of her college. And hence was left hankering after the 24-hour library facilities and the multitude of coffee dispensers that apparently characterise the service culture of American higher education institutions and for which the Bodleian Library and the St. Aldate's Coffee House are but a poor substitute. In spite of her initial seduction: 'I wish I could say I was immune to the Oxford myth, but like my compatriots, I ate up stories of Oxford, the more anachronistic and improbable, the better. . .' (1994, p. 5), the evident lesson is that, 'You can only get by for so long on tradition and a pile of nice old buildings' (1994, p. 267). So, for some, therefore, the cosy world of commensality is experienced as an anachronism with its complacency, incompetence and inefficiency. It is interesting to speculate why the Oxbridge myth finds both its most ardent admirers

and extreme critics amongst Americans. The social realities of the United States meant that the Oxbridge model of higher education could never be a serious option and yet the long historical ties have also meant that it is impossible to escape entirely its appeal. Indeed, American higher education would develop its own collegial tradition at the centre of which would be the residential college (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 128–133).

The English Residential University Model

The seductiveness of the Oxbridge residential 'collegiate way' extended also to the accommodation of students within 'halls of residence' at 'the provincial universities' (encouraged by a report – the Niblett Report – issued by the UGC on halls of residence, 1957) – as if Oxford and Cambridge were themselves actually in London and not in deepest Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire! The Victorian civics, the 1930s redbricks and most of the 1960s campus universities all followed (certainly post-1945) this model – and, indeed, some of the latter indeed were created with 'colleges' rather than mere 'halls of residence'. Instead of the dormitory or fraternity/sorority model of US universities or the student-live-at-home-with-parents-and-commute model prevalent in continental Europe and more common in Scotland (and in the English nineteenth century civics), the hall of residence blossomed. Thus the British taxpayer by the 1970s incurred the extra cost of subsidising students living in a second bedroom away from home in their university city/town or on their university campus. While British higher education looked expensive in OECD terms, in practice the amount spent on actual teaching was lower than that for other systems. Higher education was a 'lifestyle', a university not simply a place of 'study'!

Niblett, contemplating the 1960s' expansion of UK higher education that was just commencing, observed: 'Dormitories and flats, though cheaper to build [and what the students *really* wanted, if the then President of the NUS was to be believed – Straw et al., 1970], are poor substitutes for halls and colleges, however welcome as replacements of poor lodgings … Ideally, no doubt, every student on the day when he is formally admitted into the society of a university, should be admitted to membership of the society of a hall or college … But that day unhappily is still far off' (Niblett, 1962, pp. 114–115).

Of the 1960s' campuses (then the 'new' universities) Essex, however, acknowledged the NUS message and built tower-block self-catering flats, refusing to involve itself in running paternalistic halls, and hence in minding students on behalf of worried parents who 'still expect universities to impose restrictions which they have been unwilling or unable to impose themselves' (Sloman, 1964, p. 54). In contrast Kent, York and Lancaster went for a variant of the college model, while Sussex and Warwick opted for the cheaper residential block with kitchens and a central refectory. The Kent, Lancaster, York colleges were not, like Oxbridge colleges, autonomous corporations with their own financial assets. They were effectively halls of residence but with offices for academics and a Warden/Principal, a senior

common room, a small library and (it was hoped) greater *esprit de corps* than was likely to be found in a hall of residence and still less in a block of self-catering student study-bedrooms.

York revised its model along the lines of Lancaster by concentrating particular departments, naturally with academics' offices, into specific colleges rather than spreading them across the colleges. College X, in effect, became academic department Y; presumably the intention was to enhance academic efficiency and intellectual commensality (for a fuller discussion of the colleges at Kent, Lancaster and York, see Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 59–74). This is a different interpretation of intellectual commensality than embodied in the Oxbridge collegiate model. At Oxbridge the colleges were traditionally academic microcosms of their respective universities. But the question remains whether this has encouraged an intellectual commensality that is inter-disciplinary in character or has it simply stimulated 'small talk' with intellectual commensality, especially in the sciences, thriving in the large departments and laboratories?

While Sloman, Essex's first Vice-Chancellor, might claim that the traditional small-scale halls, with formal dining, were uneconomic and expensive to build and run and that academics who were willing to live-in amongst students in pursuit of a Newman ideal were 'the rarest of birds', the residential principle has clung on. That respected commentator on British higher education, Truscot, emphasised the value of the residential principle for the civics/redbricks and the need for 'the erection of many halls of residence, housing sufficient numbers to provide a community which should be really broad and varied . . . I should like to call them colleges . . . They can create and develop traditions . . . they can inspire patriotism and affection . . . healthy rivalry will aid their development . . . a residential Redbrick is on the way' (Truscot, 1945, pp. 49–53). But in the age of mass higher education Sloman's realism rather than Truscot's vision is gaining the upper hand. However in a diversified system of higher education one can expect a range of residential models to emerge with the college model, variously interpreted, providing but one example.

The Buildings

Parts of this book have been written in *The Auctarium*, the office of the Bursar of New College, Oxford, located within the Great Quadrangle built in the early 1380s. This typical don's 'room' inspired the 'set' for the revival of Christopher Hampton's *The Philanthropist* at Wyndham's Theatre in 1991 and would also fit neatly into an episode of *Inspector Morse*. The Great Quadrangle was the first 'designer' quadrangle, the purpose-built college as the model for Magdalen, King's and even Harvard and Yale in subsequent centuries (Sherwood & Pevser, 1974). Indeed, a children's jigsaw of Britain has as its piece for Oxford a picture of the New College quadrangle. In its physical manifestation collegiality is ashlar/stone walls, deal panelling, oak beams, cloisters, quadrangles, pinnacles, towers, bells, gates, barred windows, lead roofs, clipped lawns, staircases and gargoyles. . . Yet it has also central-heating (even if belatedly), en-suite student bedrooms, cabling for the internet, telephones

in all bedrooms, networked computers, sophisticated (we hope!) fire detection and alarm systems and even an air-conditioned rare books repository hidden inside the Bell Tower (constructed in 1400).

Externally the buildings appear not to change; internally they must move with the times to serve the academic and social needs of the community. In fact, the buildings, while expensive to maintain because they require original materials and skilled labour, are remarkably flexible and forgiving in terms of packing within ceiling-floor voids modern wiring and piping – even if a three-foot drill bit is needed to penetrate medieval walls! For generations of Old Members revisiting 'College' for the Gaude (reunion dinner) the place must at first sight appear the same as they left it, but happily the Hall (refectory) no longer serves War-time 'snook' and the comfort of en suite, centrally heated bedrooms is unlikely to be frowned upon. Thus, collegiality is about change within continuity and continuity amidst change; collegiality represents solidarity, security, stability; and collegiality is about timelessness and a sense of space.

Not surprisingly, Oxbridge guidebooks and University prospectuses are full of photographs and descriptions that eulogise the magic of the buildings. Beadle, in her Oxford guidebook, *These Ruins are Inhabited* (1961), provides as good an example as any:

> Beyond the entry lay a grassy quadrangle, its four sides formed by stern, stone buildings. The windows had an icy stare. We ducked through a narrow passageway and into the chapel, a walnut-panelled room with lot of stained glass, a silver altar, and a gleaming brass lectern. Through another narrow passageway a little jewel awaited us: the Fellows' Garden, a low-walled enclosure with benches and flowers and turf so well tended it had the unreal look of stage grass. As I took a step forward into it, Roger hastily said, 'I'm sorry. It's the Fellows' Garden'.
>
> (Beadle, 1961, p. 24)

And apparently there is no questioning of this prohibition:

> . . . However, others do enter the big quadrangle behind it, and it was a lovely sight. Fleecy puffs of cloud now speckled the brilliant blue of the sky, the smooth lawns sparkled in sun, and there was enough wind to set the branches of the lofty elms and chest-nuts dancing. At the far end of this garden was the dining-hall. . . Almost three stories high, the huge room was dusky even on this bright day. The stone walls and Jacobean oak panelling blotted up the small amount of light admitted by the Gothic windows, and the heavy beams arching across the ceiling were swallowed in shadow. . . The tables were long and narrow, three columns of them, each with benches, and they were set at right angles to a dais that spanned one end of the hall. 'That's High Table', Roger explained.
>
> (Beadle, 1961, pp. 24–25)

Before the great clean-up and refacing of Oxford stonework in the 1960s, the colleges must have indeed looked like ruins (Oakeshott, 1975).

Thus the physical representation of collegiality (at least as portrayed by Beadle) can be exceedingly enticing. But this is only the setting for commensality and, for all its charms, cannot be a substitute for its more tangible aspects – the daily pattern of social interaction.

Is Commensality Turning Sour?

Turning from the physical to the social dimensions of commensality, it has to be recognised that far fewer 'Senior Members' now live-in than has ever hitherto been the case – the days of the unmarried (or even the retired) don with rooms in college are over; now it is only the Chaplain, the Junior Deans, the young Junior Research Fellows and temporary Lecturers at the start of their academic careers, the Head of House, and perhaps a sprinkling of divorced middle-aged dons who reside in college. The Newmanesque ideal of the residential interaction of Members, Senior and Junior, is no longer remotely fulfilled (if ever it was) and we rarely find the intimate relationships of fellows in residence: plotting to murder each other if the college mystery novel represents any reality or scheming to get X elected as Head of House over Y at all costs if C.P. Snow's *The Masters* (1951) is a reliable account of dons in their natural habitat.

However, as noted in Chapter 2, the fellows still come together, more at lunch than at dinner, as work patterns adjust to commuting and the demands of modern family life (working partners/spouses, children to bathe and put to bed), and so Saturday evening High Table disappears and increasingly Sunday evening 'Guest Night' dinner fades; even if the wit and repartee, the *bon mot* and banter, the gossip and back-biting, may still be alive and well, as indeed they probably are amongst any group of articulate professionals.

Lest the romantic image captivate and distort consider the sad reality as commensality turns sour in the saga of Trevor Aston. Aston had been a resident don at Corpus Christi College for many years until his suicide, during which time he had so irritated his Head of House (Kenneth Dover) that the latter contemplated assisting the former's suicide in order to protect the college from what he saw as Aston's increasingly irksome, erratic and damaging behaviour (Dover, 1994). Another fellow of Corpus Christi, Valentine Cunningham, witnessed Aston's great commitment to, and love of, his college, but also observed that: 'By the end of his life Aston had become a fairly complete pain in the collegiate neck'. In effect Aston became a renegade who saw the college almost as his private fiefdom; someone who could not easily accept the constraints of collegiality including the social niceties that commensality demands. He portrayed Dover in strikingly different terms, as 'a very hard-minded empiricist, austere, a Spartan. He lived in aweingly bare circumstances in the former presidential lodgings. No aesthete he. . .' (Cunningham, 1994, December 9, p. 15).

This, however, is to portray a breakdown of collegiality at its extremes in which commensality has indeed failed, perhaps even helping to stoke the fires. Fortunately, for most Oxbridge academics, college working relationships are somewhat more congenial, but even rather minor squabbling seems to fuel both the more enticing fiction and press imagination. But also, as Valentine implies, it raises important questions about the limits to commensality in building a stable and productive community. What is the role of leadership, more particularly the Head of House, in sustaining a positive college community? What licence is to be given to renegades and mavericks? And how are they are to be sanctioned should they

flout the conventional boundaries? Commensality works by means of traditionally established conventions. But perhaps today's colleges need leadership, scholarly management and something more than medieval statutes as rulebooks in order to thrive?

But, as our previous chapter on *Continuity and Change in the Collegiate Tradition* noted, the challenges to commensality run deeper than the festering of personal animosities. To what degree are the various dimensions of commensality – as time and space, as port and sport, as code and dress – threatened by a reduction in collegiate cohesion in the face of changing fashions? What are the responses to changes in how students want to live, the new demands upon the time of academics, even the apathy of fellows (can college commitments be sustained on top of research productivity?) or in the face of cost constraints?

For most students and academics a positive feature of Oxbridge remains that colleges break up a large university into human-scale chunks. Until the mid-1980s, Oxford and Cambridge, excluding the special case of London, were at c15,000 *the* largest British universities. Now they are of middling size, with some of the former polytechnics exceeding 30,000. According to the Franks Report: 'The problem of creating a right environment is common to all large organisations. An important part of the solution lies in breaking the large organisation into manageable units with as much devolution of responsibility and power to act as is consistent with the success of the whole'. And, not surprisingly, the Report maintains that: 'The college system at Oxford gives an answer in terms of life in a university' (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 155). And many would argue what was true 40 years ago is still true today.

That said, the diagnosis of contemporary college life provides a mixed assessment of the vitality and viability of 'the collegiate way'. Contrast, for example, the equivocal portrayals of commensality given in the twentieth century volume of *The History of the University of Oxford* (Harrison, 1994; Thomas, 1994) with the more upbeat analysis of the nineteenth century (Curthoys, 1997a; Curthoys & Day, 1997). It could be argued that the collegiate ideal hit its Newmanesque high point towards the end of the nineteenth century. In 1853 Richard Cobden presented a rose-tinted summary of commensality for the dons: 'Instead of a monastery the University is rather a great nest of clubs, where everybody knows everybody . . . The best of fare, plenty of old port and sherry, and huge fires, seem the chief characteristics of the colleges' (Curthoys, 1997a, p. 167). However, for the students, colleges came to be seen 'as sanctuaries from the world . . . drawing young people even more closely together . . . sporting and drinking clubs, constant rounds of expensive entertaining, a serious interest in literature and politics – these were for the most part new, that is, new in the sense that the college was seen to be the natural home for such activities.' Not surprisingly, '. . . the undergraduate began to see the college as in effect his home towards which it was legitimate to express affection and from which, in return, he had a right to expect a certain amount of solicitude. . .' (Rothblatt, 1997a, pp. 297–298).

In short, the collegiate spirit took root in a college of some 150/200 students with 15/20 dons providing the civilising 'ballast' (in Newman's phrase). In contrast to the

utilitarianism of the University, the colleges encouraged tolerance, articulateness, intimacy, sociability and were characterised by weekend walks led by tutors, dining clubs, rowdy 'bump suppers' to celebrate rowing victories, sporting prowess, team games, (compulsory) chapel, vacation reading parties at the chalet in the French Alps, 'college ales' and instantly invented traditions. All of which was founded on a shared (public school) educational and (firmly middle-class) social background for students and dons alike. This cosy collegiate world continued more or less unchanged up to the Second World War. But, for all its strengths, it was a small and narrow world of class and status consciousness, of low horizons, of tribalism (public school vs grammar school boys, 'hearties' vs 'aesthetes,' scholars vs 'swots'), of insular English prejudice and of hostility to feminism (even to women!), with cloying paternalism, sarcastic gossip and poorly paid (yet desperately loyal) college domestic staff ('servants').

The threat to the traditional interpretation of collegiality as college, including college as commensality, came after the Second World War, as presaged by Brian Harrison in his 'College Life, 1918–1939': 'Between the Wars, Oxford's collegiate structure therefore prevailed over its critics and adapted itself to meet new requirements . . . The colleges' defenders were tightly linked, their enemies were dispersed . . .'. But the forces of fundamental change were taking root for increasingly '. . . the University's talent and resources between the Wars were being drawn towards the non-collegiate complex that was growing up in the science area; nor were the arts and social studies untouched by the scientists' professionalism. It remained to be seen whether the colleges could hold their ground as successfully in later decades . . .' (Harrison, 1994, pp. 107–108).

After the Second World War came rapid expansion, many colleges easily doubling their student numbers and trebling their dons. New, often *very* ugly buildings appeared inside ancient quadrangles, but nonetheless many undergraduates still had to 'live-out' for one or more years of their degree course. In spite of these developments, as late as in 1960 the Master of Balliol could state, with apparent aplomb, the collegiate ideal in terms that Newman would have appreciated:

> Every true Oxford man would agree that the essence of Oxford is college life. To have one's own rooms, on one's own staircase, making one's friendships with undergraduates and dons, to have meals together, to drop into one's own JCR, read in one's College Library, worship in one's own College chapel, to play on one's own field or row from one's own boathouse. . ..
> (Thomas, 1994, p. 189)

And the eulogy continues:

> It is on this intimacy of daily life that an Oxford education is based. From this it derives its unique value. A college is more than a hostel; it is more than just a private society of teachers and pupils; it is a household, a very large one, of course, but a household all the same. There is nothing quite like it and its Cambridge counterpart in the whole world.
> (Thomas, 1994, p. 189)

In reality, however, there were tensions, reflecting change in the wider society, that penetrated even Balliol's own SCR, that appear to question the Master's

contented perspective on college life. Hugh Stretton, describing divisions amongst Balliol fellows of the 1950s, writes that:

> . . .the Left suspected that the Right's idea of a decent commoner was an amiable, well-connected public-school dunce, keen on rugger and beagling but usually too drunk for either, likely to pass without effort (or qualifications) into the upper-middle ranks of government or business, to the ultimate detriment of British power, prosperity, and social justice, but sure to turn up to Gaudies and quite likely to donate silver or endow a trophy or two. The Right suspected that the Left's idea of a decent commoner was a bespectacled black beetle from a nameless secondary school who would speak to nobody, swot his solitary, constipated way to an indifferent degree, then forget the College the day he left it for a job in local government, where his chief effect on the national life would be as a chronic claimant on, and voter for, the National Health Service.
>
> (Stretton, as quoted in Thomas, 1994, p. 193)

In reality, the 'tone' of the college changed as students and dons grew apart, despite 'many self-conscious attempts to restore the intimacy between senior and junior members' (Thomas, 1994, p. 200). For example, junior research fellowships were awarded to young graduates required to 'live-in' and be involved in 'pastoral care'! But the male camaraderie of the college as a familial nursery school for gentlemen gave way to professional counselling as collegiate cohesion weakened and *in loco parentis* ended when the age of majority was reduced from 21 to 18 in 1967. The fashion for undergraduate clubs and societies changed in the iconoclastic 1960s and JCRs became politicised in line with student organisations nationally. Formality and ritual along with unquestioning hierarchy were challenged throughout British society and women students arrived in former men-only colleges from the mid-1970s onwards (proposed first, and only narrowly defeated, at New College as early as 1964).

In the 1960s it might have seemed to some that the colleges had well and truly had their day. Yet Keith Thomas concludes that by 1970 the Oxford college, albeit substantially modified and certainly weakened in relation to the University, was still autonomous and 'would continue to flourish and to provide its members with a living and working environment superior to that yet devised by any other academic institution' (Thomas, 1994, p. 215). Although the sceptic would probably argue that one might just expect him, as President of Corpus, to say exactly that! The world beyond the college gates was a-changing and certainly the closed community of college had to adapt – and some would say remarkably for the better with the advent of the 1970s' mixed college and even a revival of college life during the 1980s.

Conclusion

If collegiality as commensality for dons has been weakened, that process of change may at the same time have had a positive benefit in liberating dons from collegiality as a cloyingly complacent and conservative clubability. Meanwhile, collegiality as buildings sees the quadrangles probably better maintained than ever before and certainly more comfortable for the collegial inmates. Collegiality as commensality for students seems secure: for the most part each generation of new students ('freshers')

adapts readily to Oxford-speak; inter-college sport remains lively and competitive; the sale of cuff links and ties may be down compared with the 1950s but there are more varied items of 'badged' clothing on offer than ever before; some colleges even retain a 7.15 pm formal Hall when gowns are worn; 'sub-fusc' (gown, white shirt, white bow-tie, dark suit) is still worn for 'Schools' (finals exams); and – perhaps surprisingly – strongly upbeat descriptions of collegiate life appear in the annually revised, student-written *Alternative Prospectus* for aspiring students. Perhaps a new form of complacency has emerged, one that is essentially satisfied with today's collegial commensality?

We are in a fluid situation with colleges adjusting to the changing environment in a manner that they judge will best ensure their long-term futures. The paths are not necessarily those the colleges would have chosen if they had been free agents. They have to plan their development in the context of their present circumstances as well as the pressures they face from other institutional actors (the University, other colleges, intercollegiate bodies and even state organisations). Moreover, the key internal actors – college fellows, students and the administrative staff – will each have interests of their own to protect. These ebbs and flows occur within an environment that is increasingly less rule bound. So, students and faculty (less so administrative/support staff) are more in control of their relationship to the college. Once the norms were clear-cut, now they are more amenable to interpretation. Thus the college has less of a sense of its own identity and its members, obviously within broadly defined boundaries, can shape their own relationship to the college. The college will mean different things to different people. To some students it will be at the very centre of their lives for several years; for others little more than an upmarket hall of residence (especially if nearly all their teaching is under the control of the University).

To some tutors the college may provide little more than the occasional lunch or the even more infrequent dinner; for others it may mean an opportunity to construct an alternative (perhaps more interesting) career line. Moreover, while commensality will impose its demands, it can also have tangible compensations – congenial social relations, helpful financial benefits, the conferring of status and the provision of opportunities to exercise influence upon the development of the college. Today it is more possible to negotiate a relationship to the college rather than to allow its demands to overwhelm you. Similarly, some employees may see the college as little more than an employer (and a not particularly generous one at that), while others may find their jobs give them both satisfaction and status within a comfortable human-scale setting. The idea of the college, therefore, has rarely been so fluid and relationships to it driven so much by pragmatic considerations. This is perhaps as dramatic a period of change as that of the latter half of the nineteenth century, which saw the emergence of the idea of the college that is contemporarily under so much pressure.

Chapter 5
The Elusive Search for the Best and the Brightest

It is fortunate that there is no incompatibility between the aims of social justice, in the sense of equality of opportunity, and the effective competition for talent which is proper to Oxford or any other university. The same measures serve to secure both.
(Franks Report, 1966a)

Introduction

It is no surprise that collegiate control of the undergraduate admissions process is integral to Oxford's collegial tradition. To be an undergraduate at Oxford and Cambridge is to be a junior member of the University, which also entails membership of a college, which in addition for most students means residence in college. For all the pre-eminence of their research records the ancient collegiate Universities are still famous as undergraduate teaching institutions, and it is the selection of their undergraduates that continues to generate the keenest public, especially media, interest and on occasions to provoke the fiercest political controversy. Moreover, while both the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge exhibit periodic anguish at the apparent neglect of their graduate students, this is nothing compared to the time and energy they have devoted to the selection of their undergraduates. It is an issue that has been mulled over in great depth by the colleges, the inter-collegiate bodies and both Universities.

Historically, at Oxford and Cambridge the control of undergraduate admissions resides in the colleges with the overall administration of the system located in an inter-collegiate body; at nearly all other British universities the decisions of departments and faculties are co-ordinated by university-controlled admissions offices. This represents therefore another important manifestation of Oxbridge's exceptionalism. Lord James (one time High Master of Manchester Grammar School and then vice-chancellor of the University of York) pondered in his evidence to the Franks Commission (University of Oxford, 1965, Part IV, p. 99) whether Oxford could sustain its special mode of entry given the chaos that would ensue if every university insisted on such uniqueness. However, as is so often the case, aspects of

T. Tapper, D. Palfreyman, *Oxford, the Collegiate University*, Higher Education Dynamics 34, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0047-5_5,

the Oxbridge experience have penetrated British institutions of higher education at large. One of the authors recalls that before he was accepted as an undergraduate at a then very provincial university he was required to attend an interview of some length conducted by no less than three august members of his intended department. Moreover, and very significantly, just as control of access is integral to the collegial tradition so universally in the United Kingdom it is a critical component of university autonomy. The state may still be the main paymaster of higher education but the individual institutions select their own students, and selection means so much more when demand, as is particularly true of Oxbridge, outruns supply. Developments, therefore, in admissions procedures make it possible to draw interesting parallels between the pressures upon both the collegial tradition and university autonomy. However, beyond the re-iteration of a formal right, control of the entry process means little if you are a university that simply recruits, as opposed to selecting, students because the availability of places is greater than the demand for them.

Although the collegial control of admissions is part of Oxbridge's uniqueness, it has been accommodated within the system of higher education more generally. Both Oxford and Cambridge delayed joining UCCA (Universities Central Council for Admissions the body that at the time of its creation – 1962 – regulated undergraduate access to universities) but on joining – almost as a carrot it seems – they were given 'a cast iron guarantee' by John Fulton, the then chair of UCCA, that if they completed their admissions cycle by 31 January they would have the first choice of the available candidates (University of Oxford, 1962, p. 2). Those candidates who had been offered a place by other universities were not obliged to confirm them until after that date. Furthermore, this genuflection to Oxbridge was, at least in certain quarters, almost taken for granted: 'Moreover, with a caveat here and there, it is generally accepted within the universities as a whole that Oxford and Cambridge have not only a right but a pious duty to select their undergraduates from the ablest minority within that already select minority in the United Kingdom which proceeds to any form of higher education. Oxford, in its admissions policy pursues the twin goals of excellence and equity within a hierarchical system. . .' (Judge, 1982, pp. 236–237). Besides demonstrating Oxbridge's self-belief (Judge was an Oxford tutor) in its innate right to educate the best and the brightest, Judge's quote, like the extract from the Franks Report that heads this chapter, refers to one of this chapter's central themes: the reconciliation of the tension between the pursuit of excellence and of equity. However, notwithstanding the reassurances of Franks and Judge, this chapter will argue in its examination of the changing control of undergraduate admissions, that the two ends are not so readily married.

This chapter is organised historically and focuses primarily upon the pattern of undergraduate access to the ancient collegiate universities, but it by no means presents a detailed picture of a deeply fascinating story. The purpose is to explore, with particular reference to developments since 1945, both the challenges to Oxbridge's admissions procedures and the convoluted response to those challenges. In particular this chapter addresses the issue of the extent to which the colleges still control the admissions process and whether this remains a critical dimension of the collegial tradition. This chapter will also explore the inherent tensions that

seem to be almost embedded within collegial control. On the one hand, the admissions process at both Oxford and Cambridge illustrates perfectly the continuity of collegial co-operation. Colleges have exercised their control of admissions within agreed boundaries that have been reformed by common action. On the other hand, inter-collegiate control of access can be fragile because individual colleges, often influenced by an active admissions tutor, can stretch the boundaries in what they would consider to be the best interests of their own college. If the objective is to ensure that your college admits as high a percentage as possible of the most talented undergraduates, then how constrained should you be by the established rules? The post-1945 admissions story has been one of constant political manoeuvring in which inter-collegial tension, and very occasionally strife, is never far from the surface with possibly the starkest example of this rivalry provided by the admission of women undergraduates to the former all-male colleges.

As much as the colleges would wish otherwise, the selection of their undergraduates generates considerable public debate. A scarce resource is being distributed and those competing for it are amongst the most articulate members of the community. In such circumstances political intrusion into the affairs of the collegiate universities has been inevitable. The nineteenth century parliamentary initiatives to reform Oxford and Cambridge were stimulated in part by the determination of excluded parties to secure access; the pace of internal reform was too slow to satisfy those who had acquired new-found economic and political power. Much of the debate since 1945 has centred on the social composition of Oxbridge's undergraduate population. Is it fair that it should be so unrepresentative of the nation at large? The argument is couched in terms of social equity with the opponents of Oxbridge's exclusiveness finding wide political support, especially in the Labour Party. In the words of Zimdars, Sullivan and Heath: '. . . Oxford admissions tutors have retained a role as gatekeepers to the elite. For this reason, the Oxbridge admissions process is politically controversial and is subject to a level of debate and public interest which is not applied to any other British university' (Zimdars, Sullivan, & Heath, 2009, p. 649). The evolution of the admissions process provides, therefore, an illuminating case study of the interaction between the collegial tradition and external political pressure, frequently underwritten by state action as witnessed by the support of several governments for a 'widening participation' agenda.

So far we have not given a significant role to the Universities, as opposed to the colleges, in this ongoing drama. The explanation is obvious – until quite recently they have not had a strong part to play. In the past both Oxford and Cambridge resisted the pressure to establish a university entrance examination designed as a qualifying hurdle to exclude the weakest candidates. Furthermore, various university-imposed entrance requirements – for example, the possession of a level of competence in Greek, Latin or in two foreign languages – have been either removed or restricted. However, in the past 30 years, thanks essentially to state intervention in higher education, there have been attempts to enhance the role of the Universities. Thus the admissions story is centred around the interaction of two different issues, each exhibiting internal tensions. First, there is the tension between those who see the selection of undergraduates as a question of choosing

the best applicants, which rests uneasily with the belief that admissions procedures should reflect a keen concern with social equity (although the definition of both 'the best applicants' and 'social equity' is highly contentious, and – as noted – the Franks Report claimed that the two concerns could be reconciled). Second, there is the institutional struggle for control of the admissions process incorporating colleges, inter-collegiate bodies, university departments and faculties and increasingly the state in various guises. Moreover, the change process has not been neat and tidy but rather marked by the complex shifting and crosscutting both of institutional alliances and of conflicting values.

If there is a general message to this chapter it is that collegial control of undergraduate access to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge is more fragile than it has been in the past, and already in certain key respects is heavily compromised. But perhaps there is a more significant message. Control of access was used to select those who could be expected to appreciate and embrace collegial values. Thus the tradition of fathers trying to ensure that their sons were accepted by their alma maters and the long historical links between certain schools and colleges reinforced by Oxbridge-educated schoolmasters determined to send their best pupils to their old colleges. The implicit message to the college was that some candidates were safer bets than others! Control of admissions, therefore, was not only a key formal function of the colleges but also it was central to sustaining the collegial tradition. In keeping with our claim that collegial allegiance is more pragmatically based, then we would expect that today student loyalty is something that the colleges have to earn rather than to take for granted because they have admitted the 'right' undergraduates. If this is so, then control of the admissions process within itself has become a less vital component in maintaining collegiality. But, given the evident appeal of Oxbridge, it is hard imagine that it would prove to be particularly difficult to attract students already enamoured of the two Universities and their colleges. Loyalty is undoubtedly relatively easy to earn.

Internal Boundary Maintenance: The Quiet Before the Post-1945 Storm

Following the redefinition of the collegial tradition in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the most serious direct political pressure upon the collegiate universities found expression in the Asquith Commission (Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge Universities), which reported in 1922. As a consequence of the Commission's Report both Oxford and Cambridge were added to the University Grants Committee's (UGC) list and were henceforth eligible for the recurrent grant that they had been awarded until then on an ad hoc basis. While the long-term consequences of these developments were nothing short of momentous for British universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, the short-term effects were marginal. The Asquith Commission lacked the direct reforming impact of the commissions of the 1850s and the 1870s/1880s, and the two Universities were left to evolve quietly as internal forces responded to the pattern of social and economic change.

The evolution of admissions procedures reflected the wider picture. Indeed, the University of Cambridge, after a bitter internal struggle, was able to resist the pressure to grant women full membership of the University. The Asquith Commission had supported the change (although full membership did not equate with anything like equal status), but powerful elements within Cambridge resisted, and one can only wonder why the government did not threaten the withdrawal of the UGC's annual grant. However, there were important organisational changes as the colleges formed groups that followed an agreed rotating schedule for the conduct of their scholarship examinations. Colleges also started to impose entrance examinations to keep out the dullest of their would-be-students, but one suspects that the standards were far from rigorously enforced. Even a reforming Chancellor like Lord Curzon saw it as part of Oxford's duty to educate the gentlemen commoners: '. . .. it appears to me to be a part of the function of Oxford to educate the Passman, and that, if it is to continue to deserve the name of a University, it has few more important duties to perform than to give a good general education to the man of birth and means' (Curzon, 1909, p. 117). And the Asquith Commission concurred, calling for the retention of the pass degree but the imposition of a university entrance examination (Asquith Commission, 1922a, p. 42). While Oxbridge's critics may doubt whether the Sebastian Flytes have been completely excluded, certainly post-1945 their presence waned rapidly.

Although we offer no quantitative evidence to substantiate the point, there is considerable anecdotal evidence to support the claim that in some families there was a tradition in which sons followed in their fathers' footsteps as members of the same house at public school and of the same college at the University. It does not take much imagination to visualise father-and-son trips to the old college with a guided tour to be followed by dinner in college with a tutor and an undergraduate cousin. In this picture the school and college are a central part of family history, institutions that steer the sons into manhood. The links between colleges and schools can be more easily quantified. There are the closed scholarships that survived the nineteenth century's reforms only to succumb to the political pressures of the 1960s. Then there are the open awards, scholarships and exhibitions, which – whatever their merits – led to the creation of an annual league table comparing the results of those schools, mainly the public and ex-direct grant schools, that entered candidates. The schools were akin to racing stables training their charges for the prized competitions and charting up their successes at the end of the season. Their students reaped the tangible rewards; the schools basked in the reflected glory; and the colleges, complacently and contentedly, could feel that all was well with the world.

In this world personal ties were critical to the functioning of the system. It was not uncommon for schoolmasters to become dons and for dons to become schoolmasters. Even today the heads of the leading public schools can be serious contenders should a college be seeking to elect a new head. Certainly many public schools masters would have received an Oxbridge education and maintained their college links. Moreover, the quasi-professionalisation of the admissions process within Oxbridge is a comparatively recent development, and it was not unknown for college heads, rather than subject tutors, to conduct interviews. The scholars may have entered via

the examination route but the commoners most decidedly did not. Again it does not take a great deal of imagination to envisage the exchanges of cultural capital that were taking place at interviews. We all find some people easier to communicate with than others, and equally there are some referees whose judgements we trust more than others.

What we had, therefore, was a dual admissions process, one for commoners and one for scholars. While both were relatively encapsulated access channels, they had different qualities. The admission of scholars was narrowly defined and, although a range of qualities was desired, the key to success was performance in the college entrance examinations. The process was highly structured, requiring not only considerable talent but also the correct schooling to ensure that individual ability was expressed in an acceptable form. Although its defenders argued that it was a demanding test of intellectual potential that enabled the schools to escape the allegedly narrow fact-grubbing grind imposed by examination boards (Lee, 1972, p. 19), it seemed also to encourage a particular intellectual style, that of the highly gifted generalist. In some respects the process could be seen as the sponsorship of an intellectual elite, especially if subsequently the scholar was awarded a distinguished first-class honours degree. Individuals were marked out for success almost before they had commenced their careers; thereafter, even if early promise should evaporate, they could always remain the 'coming man' so subtly parodied in Powell's *Dance to the Music of Time*. Of course for the commoners entrance arguably was more dependent upon social capital (manifested in who wrote your references and how you interviewed) as the ability to pass exams. While entry through the scholarship system was clearly more structured it was also hidden from the wider public gaze, whereas the admission of commoners was a more informal and fluid process in which personal ties played a critical part.

It is comparatively easy to find evidence of the historically narrow social composition of the Oxbridge undergraduate populations (for two interesting broad-ranging overviews, which illustrate *both* the changing patterns of social recruitment and continuity, see Stone, 1974, pp. 3–110; Jenkins & Caradog Jones, 1950, pp. 93–116). In the first half of the twentieth century there was particular concern at the virtual exclusion of women, and the severe obstacles that would-be scholars from poor families encountered. Indeed, it can be reasonably argued that the nineteenth century reformers had been more concerned to establish competition for scholarships and fellowships than they were to promote the cause of poor scholars. What was changing were the underlying values of the collegiate universities rather than their social composition. In fact it could be argued that the interests of the bourgeoisie were enhanced more at the expense of the poor than of the rich. Until well into the twentieth century wealthy families could continue to secure a place for their sons, but increasingly the acquisition of a scholarship depended upon exposure to an appropriate schooling and that could rarely be acquired without at least a middle-class income.

But to concentrate upon the social composition of the collegiate universities is to focus the interest in the character of the undergraduate body very narrowly. That composition may have been restricted socially but was very diverse in other

important respects. Although public financial support for students commenced much earlier than is widely realised (the Asquith Commission refers to close to half the undergraduates in some Oxbridge colleges as receiving financial aid 'public or private, from other sources than their parents and natural guardians' – Asquith Commission, 1922a, p. 40), perhaps the most critical requirement of a would-be-Oxbridge undergraduate prior to 1945 was that she/he could afford to pay the fees. Nonetheless, the colleges were a refuge for a diverse range of personalities offering different qualities: scholars, athletes, aesthetes, hearties, the socially graceful and even the wildly eccentric. This is not to suggest that today's students are stamped out of the same mould on a personality assembly line but that the pressures are such that it is more difficult for them to find the time to deviate from the straight and narrow pursuit of academic success. It is a reasonable assumption that today's Oxford cannot boast – or be embarrassed by – many Anthony Blanches of *Brideshead* notoriety, and it follows that colleges are less likely to be seeking out particularly distinctive personalities or purposefully recruiting those who are most likely to ensure the perpetuation of esoteric collegial traditions.

It is important, however, not to over-guild the lily by implying that prior to the Second World War the intellectual potential of undergraduates carried no weight. For a few dons success on the river or the playing field may indeed have been more important to college esteem than finals results. But how many encouraged this cult of athleticism is difficult to discern. In its evidence to the Asquith Commission, the Headmasters Conference (HMC) gave a sharp insight into the scramble for academic talent: 'No measure of reform [regulating the competition between colleges for scholars] has been more consistently urged by Headmasters than this. The evils of the present system are familiar alike to School and to University Authorities, and must be obvious to all. For many years past Colleges at Oxford and Cambridge have been involved in what may not be unfairly called an undignified scramble for the pick of the Public School Candidates, in which the stronger colleges, singly or in groups, manoeuvre for the earliest weeks, and the weaker must either compete with them or wait for the first unoccupied date' (Asquith Commission, 1922b, p. 58). In fact, as the HMC proposed, college examinations were reformed by placing the colleges in groups and rotating their examinations according to an agreed schedule. Moreover, there developed at Oxford 'trumping': colleges could use scholarships to trump another college's offer. It may sound a somewhat contrived way of distributing academic talent, but placing the colleges in groups and rotating the dates for interview demonstrated the willingness of the colleges to act co-operatively in order to share out what was perceived as a scarce resource – the most academically gifted candidates. While, in direct contrast, 'trumping' suggests that fierce competition lurked just beneath the smooth surface of collegial co-operation.

Therefore, up until the conclusion of the Second World War access to the collegiate universities followed two quite separate channels: one for the commoners and other for the scholars. While each channel may have favoured certain social groups, and most certainly worked against the interests of other social groups, it could be argued that – except for scholars – the admissions criteria were relatively undemanding. The colleges needed undergraduates who could afford to pay the fees,

who would fit in and – hopefully – would prove capable of graduating. This was a loosely policed self-regulated world in which so much was done through established social networks. Although the academically talented were in demand, there was no one model of the ideal college man. Although the great colleges would always attract the most academically gifted undergraduates, they at least recognised that the poorer colleges should be able to tap into the pool of talent. But it is difficult to imagine that Sebastian Flyte could have been an undergraduate of any college other than the House (Christ Church).

The Numbers Game: Meritocracy and Equality of Opportunity

Merit as Examination Success

Undoubtedly the expansion of demand for higher education since 1945, albeit in fits and starts, has exerted a very significant pressure upon the admissions procedures of all universities. The demand expanded because there was an increasing supply of suitably qualified applicants. The pressure therefore was from below, essentially from the secondary schools with expanding sixth-forms whose pupils studied A-level GCEs and acquired better grades. In more recent years this social change has been reinforced by the fact that governments of all political persuasions have come to see education as a crucial economic asset and so encouraged its expansion. Supposedly, we have a knowledge-based economy that is dependent upon an increasing supply of qualified labour, which means there is a demand for more graduates. Not surprisingly, these questionable assertions are entwined with a political agenda: access to higher education needs to embrace the principle of social equity, which can be more readily accomplished if universities expand in size while broadening the social character of their undergraduate intakes. Furthermore, 'going to uni' has steadily become part of the rite de passage into adulthood for many young people, especially those from middle-class families.

The expansion of higher education was bound to impact upon Oxbridge, increasing demand for its degrees and forcing changes in its admissions procedures. As the Franks Inquiry noted, 'Before 1945 admissions presented no particular problem for Oxford or for any other British university; but the increase in numbers of those wanting a university education has changed the picture' (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 65). And Franks reinforced the point with a very interesting personal reflection from Sir Maurice Bowra, the then Warden of Wadham College: '. . .Until 1945 suitable entries seldom exceeded the actual places available. The colleges, with very rare exceptions, took almost anyone who was thought good enough to get some sort of degree and able to pay his way' (University of Oxford, 1965, Part IV, 17).

How have these changes in the law of supply and demand impacted upon the control of the Oxbridge admissions procedures? The emergence of the admissions offices in the 1960s, the Oxford Colleges Admissions Office (OCAO) and the Cambridge Intercollegiate Applications Office (CIAO), was an administrative

response to the burgeoning demand. Under the control of the colleges, their creation tied Oxbridge administratively into UCCA (now UCAS – the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) while allowing policy direction to remain in the hands of the colleges. Almost inevitably, however, to create inter-collegiate bodies with management committees carried the threat that control of the decision-making process would ebb away from the individual colleges. Although the admissions offices may have performed essentially administrative and clerical functions, it would be absurd not to recognise they would become centres of expertise, and no sane policy-making body will consistently ignore the advice of its experts. Inevitably, the admissions process was increasingly centralised and professionalised. Within the colleges themselves this had already been reflected in the virtual demise in the role of the heads of colleges in the selection of entrants accompanied by the arise of Admissions Tutors. Nonetheless, the decision about an individual candidate remained (and still remains) with the particular college subject tutors. But one wonders how long will it be before an Admissions Tutor, as the college manager-professional, *guides* – or even instructs the subject tutors – on how to achieve 'a balanced social intake'?

The critical policy change has been the merging of the previously separate entry channels for scholars and commoners. For a significant period of time post-1945 the *main* route of undergraduate entry into Oxford and Cambridge was via college examinations sat for after the applicants had acquired their A levels. As Lee puts it, A levels acted as a pre-selection examination determining the field of would-be Oxbridge entrants (Lee, 1972, p. 12). The second, and narrower, route was composed of those candidates who attempted the college examinations in the fourth, rather than the seventh, term of their sixth form. In theory the two groups of candidates were competing on equal terms as college examinations were meant to be a test of *academic potential* but many, certainly outside Oxbridge, were highly sceptical. Slowly but surely, the colleges of both universities came to rely less upon their own college examinations and became more dependent upon A- or S-level grades, coupled with interviews, to determine access. The development was more pronounced at Cambridge, with the scientists leading the way. Consequently, the number of offers, both conditional and unconditional, based on A-level grades steadily increased. Although such developments caused much soul searching within Oxbridge, and perhaps even some shedding of tears within the public schools, these were essentially technical developments accompanying a key value change that had already occurred: access to an Oxbridge education should be based solely on meritocratic criteria as defined by performance in publicly controlled examinations. This became the criteria for determining who allegedly possessed those qualities that would enable them to benefit most from an Oxbridge education. It is not that other measures of academic potential were irrelevant or that non-academic variables were completely disregarded, but they were increasingly marginalised.

Undoubtedly the most important post-war procedural changes in the Oxbridge admissions procedures occurred in the 1980s. Under the leadership of Sir Kenneth Dover, President of Corpus Christi, the Oxford colleges indulged in another bout of navel-gazing and the outcomes included the creation of two modes of entry

(E and N), the restriction of college entrance examinations to candidates in the fourth term of their sixth form careers, the abolition of open awards at the point of entry (closed awards – restricted to candidates with a particular background, e.g. by schooling or residence – had been abolished some years earlier on the recommendation of the Franks Inquiry), a bar on individual colleges instigating their own special entry schemes and a promise to review the situation 5 years hence. Cambridge, under the guidance of its Tutorial Representatives Committee, was even more radical: it abolished college examinations (thus creating a temporary rupture with Oxford), instigated its sixth term examination (known as STEP – Sixth Term Examination Papers), but still permitted individual colleges to run their own special entry schemes if they so desired (Tapper & Salter, 1992, pp. 202–209).

In the 1990s, as a result of its second 5-year review of the Dover reforms, the Oxford colleges finally decided to abandon college examinations (thus bringing them into line with Cambridge). Henceforth the colleges would make conditional and unconditional offers on the basis of A levels (or equivalents) supplemented by interviews, the submission of examples of candidates' written work and tests set on the day of interview, but there was to be no equivalent of the STEP examination. Incidentally, the use of specialist examination results, such as STEP, in the selection process appears to be increasingly confined to particular subjects – medicine, veterinary medicine, law and mathematics to name the most important. While the Dover reforms were another important procedural change, one that realigned the admissions hurdles at the two ancient collegiate universities, it was no more than that. The principle that Oxford's applicants and entrants needed to be the brightest and the best had been long established; what needed to change was the means by which they were selected.

Accommodating Equality of Opportunity

The first line of defence to the post-1945 critique of Oxbridge's admissions was the implicit faith placed in the potency of the meritocratic ethos. If undergraduates were selected solely on the basis of their academic potential, as measured by performance in public examinations, then how could Oxbridge be criticised? However, the idea of meritocratic selection ran up against an even more powerful post-war ideological theme – 'equality of educational opportunity'. Social justice prevailed only if equality of educational opportunity could be seen to be working effectively. And how was this to be demonstrated? Within higher education the test was the social composition of the undergraduate population: if this was considered to be skewed unacceptably in one direction or another, the implicit assumption was that equality of educational opportunity was being thwarted, and consequently was deemed to be socially unjust.

Although this may be expressing somewhat baldly the dilemma that Oxbridge faced, it is the essence of the problem. Initially there were three precise targets: gender, class and schooling. The gender composition of the undergraduate population emerged as an issue in the nineteenth century and the admission, let alone

full and equal integration of women into British universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, has been a long struggle that is far from complete, and the higher one goes up the academic hierarchy, the more visible it becomes. However, at least in terms of undergraduate entry, the problem is essentially resolved and, while female undergraduates may be concentrated in particular disciplines, this is far less an admissions problem and more a reflection of biases within British culture generally and not just within higher education.

Historically the concern with the exclusion of the poor but gifted student centred around the financial difficulties they encountered, and very pragmatic reforms were put forward: keeping college fees low, barring those with no financial need from receiving the monetary rewards of scholarships and exhibitions and encouraging cheaper non-college residence. With the increasing state input into the payment of fees and the availability of maintenance grants the financial hurdle became less of a concern (although with the recent imposition of variable student fees, albeit underwritten by income-contingent loans, the financial bar to participation in higher education has re-emerged as a key issue) and attention was redirected at the cultural barriers that lowered working-class participation in higher education. In terms of access for children from poorer working-class families, although Oxford and Cambridge remain more impenetrable institutions, British higher education generally has a very poor record. The recent rapid expansion of participation in British higher education has incorporated more women, more mature students and a larger segment of the middle class while those from unskilled working-class families remain conspicuous by their relative non-involvement. This leaves the visibly narrow schooling of their undergraduates as the particular stick with which to beat the Oxbridge colleges and to prick the social consciences of the fellows.

The college examinations, which it should be remembered were steadily extended to incorporate all would-be-undergraduates, were the obvious target. We have noted the objections to closed scholarships, the combined selection of fourth and seventh term sixth form applicants (and remember that many state schools were unable or unwilling to establish express examination streams and run post-A-level courses) and the long-established sociocultural links between many of the Oxbridge colleges and the leading public schools. In effect there was not a level playing field. The reforms of the 1980s represented an attempt by the two Universities to ameliorate the situation. Allegedly at both Oxford and Cambridge the admissions procedures became simpler, more akin to what prevailed in other British universities and fairer. But while Oxbridge may have deluded itself that it had created a level playing field, and the perceived problem was how to boost applications from the state sector, as long as pupils from the fee-paying schools continued to dominate the admissions figures powerful political forces would not be convinced. The definition of social justice is measured in terms of substantive outcomes rather than procedural devices.

The Oxbridge delusion was to believe that if it could resolve the procedural problem then the political critique would abate. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that the Oxford colleges had decided to retain the college entrance examination

as part of their mid-1980s reform package, which increased their vulnerability to external pressure. For the critics the college entrance examination was central to the problem, and yet opinion in Oxford at that time was determined to retain it – there was no sharp and consistent shift on a broad front towards the politically correct target. But events were moving swiftly

In its final report a sub-committee set up in the early 1990s to review undergraduate admissions at Oxford (henceforth called, after its chair, the Crouch Report) claimed that there was in fact a 'decline in applicants from the maintained sector' and that this was 'particularly evident at Oxford as against Cambridge', which, in the sub-committee's opinion, suggested 'that the examination acts as a deterrent' (Oxford Colleges Admissions Office, 1994 October 10, p. 1). The situation appeared to be deteriorating and it is not surprising that in the 1990s after a short, sharp struggle the Oxford colleges decided to abolish the entrance examination and move closer to the Cambridge model. That these reforms at Oxford were driven by a concern to make their admission system appear more socially equitable is clear from the final report of Crouch's sub-committee. It is noted that there were practical reasons for ending the examination, 'but more dominant in the responses to the interim report [in which the sub-committee had actually proposed the retention of an entrance examination!] were the equity arguments for ending it' (Oxford Colleges Admissions Office, 1994 October 10, p. 1). But this was yet another procedural change and, unless it were to be accompanied by a substantive shift in the social composition of Oxbridge's undergraduate population, the critics were unlikely to be moved.

But what should be the Oxbridge target? Cambridge has plumped for the comparative A-level performance of state and independent school pupils: 'We think that a split of 65% state pupils and 35% from independent schools would be a fair proportion of the brightest and the best' (Dr. Susan Stobbs, Chair of Cambridge's Admissions Forum, as reported by O'Leary, 1997 20 October, p. 1). And subsequently, implied support for a move in this direction was offered by Amartya Sen, Master of Trinity College: 'There is a crucial need to remove the factors that discourage students from disadvantaged backgrounds from applying to Oxbridge. For example, whereas nearly two-thirds of those who get three As at A level are from maintained schools, the proportion of applications to Cambridge that come from these state schools is not very much above half' (Amartya Sen, 1998 1 May, p. 14). But, judged by their public statements, some of the leading figures within Oxford seem to have experienced greater difficulty in coming to terms with reality. For example, Ruth Deech, Principal of St Anne's College and the then Chair of Oxford's Joint University Admissions Committee (JUAC), is reported to have said of the decision to scrap the college entrance examination: 'This is not social engineering or political correctness. There are no quotas or targets. We simply want the best'. And with respect to the balance between students from state or fee-paying schools: 'If there is 100% of one or 100% of the other that doesn't bother me' (Targett, 1995 February 17, p. 48). In an ideal world, one governed by the values of Oxford dons, such sentiments would sound perfectly reasonable but given the political context one suspects – or at least hopes! – that such bold assertions were meant more

for internal university consumption than as a considered contribution to the wider political dialogue.

While it may be inevitable that both Oxford and Cambridge have to demonstrate their good faith in the search for equality of educational opportunity by responding positively to the state's widening participation agenda, it leaves them with practical problems while undermining the principle that they control – through their colleges – the process of undergraduate admissions. The first practical problem is the identification of the appropriate targets. This chapter has referred to gender, class and schooling as the traditional foci but more recently attention has turned to race, ethnicity, the disabled, those whose families have no history of participation in higher education and the residents of localities in which deprivation is prevalent (known as POLAR – Participation of Local Areas). Evidently there are no social boundaries in the search for equality of educational opportunity (and for a sophisticated analysis of whether 'cultural capital' – as a mediating variable – helps explain the link between 'social background' and being offered a place at the University of Oxford, see Zimdars et al., 2009). The second practical problem is precisely what to measure. Should it be the social pattern of applications or actual admissions? Should it be the comparison of applications to admissions while controlling for social variables (and, if so, what social variables)? In the search for social equity what weight should the universities give to proven examination success? Is a measure of positive discrimination permitted? With reference to undergraduate admissions at Oxford, Halsey and McCrum wrote in 1988 that 'An exciting period of experiments in the sociology of education lies ahead' (Halsey & McCrum, 1998, p. 3). 'Exciting', however, might not be the adjective that admissions tutors would use to describe developments over the past 10 years.

The pressures generated by the expansion of demand and the need to respond to the social equity agenda have raised the question of whether the colleges can continue to control undergraduate admissions. In a formal sense the inter-collegiate bodies are still responsible for the administration of undergraduate admissions and college tutors continue to decide the fate of individual applicants. The question is what degree of discretion can the college admissions tutors, the inter-collegiate management bodies and those tutors who actually interview candidates exercise when they make their decisions? Currently the pressure appears to be indirect rather than direct (targets as opposed to defined quotas), with much of the internal effort directed at changing the social pattern of *applications* and monitoring whether the admissions profile shifts to match a changing (hopefully) applications profile. In this respect Oxford is moving in the 'desired' direction. Regardless of the external pressure the colleges may have chosen this direction, but the impression is that this is a road they have been pressured to travel rather than one they have embraced wholeheartedly.

The other important consideration is that the admissions controversies tend to put the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge (rather than their individual colleges) under the public and political microscope. The political turmoil generated by the failure to offer Laura Spence a place to read medicine was seen as the responsibility of the University of Oxford rather than of the college (Magdalen College) to which

she had applied. Inevitably the University was dragged into the morass and forced to make a response, and, given that entry to medicine is essentially under departmental direction, this is as it should have been. However, it is not surprising that some university officials felt that the fracas illustrated the need for stronger university influence over undergraduate admissions.

Today Oxford's exceptionalism with regard to undergraduate admissions is in fact on the wane. At the institutional level, Oxford has established its Joint Undergraduate Admissions Committee (JUAC) and Cambridge its Joint Consultative Committee on Admissions (JCCA), and the admissions offices now have titles that do not denote an explicit college link – The Undergraduate Admissions Office (Oxford) and The Cambridge Admissions Office. The intervention of the respective Universities emerged out of a combination of the long-term concerns of the faculties (which had been expressed long ago in their evidence to the 1996 Franks Commission), the desire of central government to control the overall growth of student numbers and the de facto imposition of subject quotas during periods of restraint.

The 1997 North Commission Report gave a telling insight into the then weakness of the University's input at Oxford. It recommended the creation of a '. . .new joint Standing Committee on Access with membership drawn from both university bodies and the colleges, and chaired by the Vice-Chancellor in the first instance', with the primary policy objective of initiating ways in which Oxford can broaden undergraduate access. The Commission explicitly rejected the idea that the JUAC could undertake such an initiative 'since its main responsibilities are for managing the details of the annual admissions process' (University of Oxford, 1997a, p. 36). Thus, although policy control still remains formally in the hands of the colleges and the collegiate bodies, increasingly Oxford has found ways of imposing a stronger university steer of the admissions process. The Admissions Committee of the Conference of Colleges incorporates a university presence, engages with university personnel in the discussion and resolution of policy issues and reports to the Education Committee of the University's chief executive body, its Council. Thus, undergraduate admissions policy is now more of a shared area of responsibility in which the colleges have given ground to the University, so adding to the federal character of Oxford in this particular policy field.

However, it would be naive to assume that the colleges were unaware of the need to consider the principle of social equity when they made their decisions. What we are witnessing is a power struggle surrounding one of the key functions of the collegiate university. The external pressures are increasing the pressure that the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge can exert on their colleges. With respect to 'the Laura Spence Affair', the then Chancellor of the Exchequer (to become Prime Minister, Gordon Brown), who led the critique of Oxford, may have been misconceived (or simply prejudiced) but these are practices that are not going to be easily defended by an appeal to the evident correctness of the established procedures. The critical focus has been on outcomes not process.

It is important to note that procedures have changed over at least the past 20 years along lines indicating a stronger university input into the admissions process. The

Oxford colleges have abandoned the use of special college schemes and, while arguing that 'there are no standard offers at Oxford for any of our courses', and that 'all candidates are considered very carefully on their individual merits', the 1998 Undergraduate Prospectus went on to state that: 'It is expected that, *across all subjects*, AAB will be the most common offer. . .' (University of Oxford, 1998, p. 191, emphasis added). Increasingly, it is the departments and faculties that have determined the conditions of entry, including the candidates' submission of written work and completion of tests at interview, while the colleges have the task of putting the whole operation into effect. Moreover, the individual candidate – especially in the sciences – may be more persuaded to apply by a visit to the University in order to attend a faculty/departmental open day (another relatively new innovation) than by any visit to his or her prospective college.

Conclusion: The More Things Change. . .?

This chapter has explored two of the distinguishing characteristics of the undergraduate admissions procedures at Oxford and Cambridge: they were markedly different from practices that prevailed at other universities (their exceptionalism) and they exhibited an inherent instability generated by the potentially conflicting interests of those involved in the selection process. This conclusion will evaluate whether contemporary procedures continue to support the validity of these perceptions and end with a short reflection on the current relationship between the collegial tradition and the control of undergraduate access to Oxford and Cambridge.

Controlling Conflict Through Boundary Maintenance

The past inherent instability of the system is well illustrated by two very different case studies. The innovative special entrance scheme instigated at Hertford College under the auspices of its then admissions tutor Dr. Neil Tanner can be interpreted as a courageous attempt to broaden the social base of the college; the fact that it also helped the college to climb the Norrington Table (Oxford's ranking of its colleges by the performance of their students in finals examinations) did not go unnoticed: 'Until Hertford first introduced its unconditional offer scheme in 1965 it had been consistently among the bottom three colleges in the "Norrington league" of degree results. This year it was in second place' (Education Correspondent, 1981, 30 January). If this was the outcome, it is unsurprising that other colleges moved to set up their own special entrance schemes. Colleges could ease their social consciences as they fulfilled their institutional ambitions.

The rapid movement in the 1970s towards the admission of women in the men's colleges can be similarly interpreted. At Oxford the University attempted to stagger the pace of change and the men's colleges were expected to admit women in agreed stages. But the ability of individual colleges to drive the pace of change from below made a complete mockery of any attempt at central control, beautifully illustrated

by the following reminiscence, '... and we all went along to the meeting where the arrangements for this were going to be finalised, and the representative of one college... got up and said "I just want to tell you all that if my College's name doesn't come out of that hat, we're admitting women anyway", followed by the representative of another college... who said, "that goes for us", and that ended the entire plan' (*History of the University of Oxford*, 1986 11 March, pp. 16–17). So much for the sensibilities of the women's colleges and the commitment to collegial co-operation. Once again one needs to ponder whether the colleges were in such a haste to admit women because they had been converted to the cause of extending educational opportunities or whether their motives were more complex. For example, assuming all other things remained equal, the willingness to accept women at a man's college would automatically increase the competition for places; with a larger pool of applicants it was very likely that those accepted would be of a higher academic standard. Moreover, there was always the fear that potential male applicants could desert you for a mixed college. Regardless of what was going to occur, these sentiments were widely shared and thus explain the speed at which some colleges were prepared to break ranks.

But when matters threatened to spiral out of hand the upshot was the creation of the Dover Committee: individual initiatives were starting to undermine the overall stability of Oxford's admissions system and a steadying hand was needed to recreate a sense of order. However, although in theory the reforms of the mid-1980s simplified the admissions procedures of both Oxford and Cambridge, in practice, because the colleges were allowed to interpret the reforms in a manner that best suited their own interests, the outcome was at least some variation, if not confusion. Critically, different colleges at both Oxford and Cambridge required (or at least indicated preferences for) contrasting entrance requirements of candidates applying for the same subject. Cambridge still permits some marginal variation but there is more uniformity than there used to be, with what variations persist initiated more by the departments than by the colleges. Applicants, therefore, will be treated differently depending upon what degree they wish to read rather than depending upon the college they have chosen. However, it can be argued, perhaps ironically in view of its more centralised system of governance that, at least until quite recently, Cambridge comes across as more pragmatic and relaxed about changes driven by its colleges.

It is important, however, not to overstate the difference between the colleges at either Cambridge or Oxford. The expectation is that all those home-based students who are offered places will obtain high A-level grades and what variations continue to exist do so within this constraint. A combination of the dominance of meritocratic values, the need to build defences against the charge that social bias continues to underwrite the selection process and the pressure from the Universities' faculties and departments ensure that college control of undergraduate admissions is now steered within defined boundaries and the college selection process is circumscribed.

The Interview: Exceptionalism Reaffirmed?

Now that both Universities have abandoned entrance examinations the most significant feature of the admissions process that the Oxbridge colleges share is their desire to interview candidates. In their prospectuses all the colleges express this wish. In 1993, in a very insightful review of the Cambridge admissions process, Martin Golding – Admissions Tutor of Peterhouse College – wrote: 'The abolition of the entrance exam means the interview is the central plank of the selection process. . . The interview is very taxing both for candidates and the interviewers since so much depends on it'. In Golding's view the system had become more eclectic (and more eccentric?), partly because so much depended upon individual judgements of the intangible quality of interviewees and partly because colleges have different policies on the number of conditional offers they would make – not to mention the varying styles of the interviewers. Does a college make numerous conditional offers, setting very demanding A-level targets and shedding many candidates when the results are known? Or, does it make fewer offers, with less-demanding targets so accepting a higher percentage of those to whom it has made offers? (Golding, 1993, p. 10). Although this situation had not been unknown at Oxford, inevitably it became more of an issue after their colleges had also forsaken their entrance examinations.

The Crouch Report raised perhaps the most critical problem that any selection process relying heavily on interviewing has to face: '. . . interviewing is an extremely subjective form of assessment and interview performance is particularly vulnerable to differences of social background' and to mitigate against this the Report recommended 'that the training in interviewing currently provided through the Admissions Office become part of the routine induction of all new tutors' (Oxford Colleges Admissions Office, 1994, p. 2). But it is difficult to imagine that such moves will succeed in eliminating entirely the media interest. Therefore, although apparently making their admissions procedures simpler, fairer and closer to practices in other universities, it is also apparent they still retain the character of a private process in which subjective judgements – no matter how professionally – are made. College examinations may have presented a formidable facade to the state schools and their pupils, but, in comparison to the world of interviewing, they represent a more public and rational selection mode. Undoubtedly examination marking imposes a more stringent standard of accountability than the conduct of interviews. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that colleges can still impose tests on interview days as well as require students to bring along some of their written work, although these 'special' requirements may be more the result of departmental pressure where demand for places is especially severe (e.g. law and medicine).

It is vital to stress, however, that Oxbridge's problem is far from unique. Many prestigious universities face the problem that they have more applicants than places to offer. Even many less-prestigious institutions will have particular departments for which demand exceeds supply. Furthermore, grades in the public examinations are not necessarily sufficiently discriminating to resolve the problem. If all candidates

have obtained the highest examination grades then how is selection to be determined if not through interviews and/or additional 'tests'? Therefore, the fears about the demands that interviews place on interviewers and interviewees, coupled with the fact that they are the perfect arena for the exchange of social and cultural capital, are not confined to Oxbridge. Ironically, there may now be more internal differentiation within the admissions procedures of many universities (dependent upon the pattern of supply and demand for individual departments) than there is at Oxbridge. For example, pitching conditional offers at different levels with respect to A-level grades, interviewing or not interviewing, and decisions concerning those applicants who fail to meet their conditional offer targets. We may well have reached a situation in which in terms of admissions procedural exceptionalism is the norm rather than confined to Oxbridge. Moreover, if the ceiling on variables fees is raised the pressure for the differentiation of admissions practices within universities will undoubtedly become more marked. But, of course, the forms that will take will vary according to the university's market position in relation to the demand for its undergraduate courses.

The reference in the Crouch Report to the potential intrusion of social variables into the interviewing process is especially interesting. Historically this was thought to favour those with the sociocultural capital who would most easily fit into the stereotypical Oxbridge model of the undergraduate. But if, as the North Report claims, Oxford needs policies, which will widen its social diversity, then why not use the interview to achieve this objective? And one suspects, given the pressure to change direction, that this may already be happening – and not only at Cambridge and Oxford. A relatively concealed form of assessment, dependent on personal judgements, can be conveniently used to fulfil different social ends.

Given that the admissions process is about the distribution of a scarce resource it is perhaps inevitable that it will always be inherently instable. Contemporarily the situation has been made even more complex by the politically driven 'widening participation' agenda. This is a consideration that cannot be ignored but it is not a unique pressure upon Oxbridge. It is faced by all universities in which demand for places exceeds supply, although the pressure may be particularly fierce at both Oxford and Cambridge. However, it is important to remember that some of the tension within the admissions processs at the two Universities is also self-generated. It is an internal competitive process in which colleges seek to admit those they consider to be the best candidates. Thus colleges are competing against one another, and one of the central functions of the two Universities, along with the inter-collegiate bodies, has been to regulate this competition. Perhaps better than any other characteristic of the collegial tradition, the undergraduate admissions process has illustrated both its internal tensions and the intensity of inter-collegial competitiveness.

Chapter 6
The Tutorial System: The Jewel in the Crown

What an Oxford tutor does is to get a little group of students together and smoke at them. Men who have been systematically smoked at for four years turn into ripe scholars . . . A well-smoked man speaks and writes English with a grace that can be acquired in no other way.

(Stephen Leacock as quoted in Morrell, *1997)*

Introduction

In his encyclopaedic *A History of the University of Oxford*, Mallet has claimed that the commitment of the Oxford colleges to supervise 'the conduct and instruction of their younger colleagues was a natural development of the collegiate idea' (Mallet, 1927, p. 57) and, likewise, the emergence of the college tutor 'was a natural development of the college system' (Mallet, 1927, p. 134). What is fascinating about the history of the European universities is how in the middle ages, having 'constituted an intellectual community embodying the same ideal' (Ashby, 1966, p. 4), they acquired very different characteristics in response to the Reformation and the rise of nationalism (Halsey & Trow, 1971, p. 34). McConica has made the point most precisely: 'Outside Oxford a like development [the rise of the Elizabethan undergraduate college providing education and moral guidance to gentlemen commoners] can be discovered only at Cambridge. At Paris and Louvain, for example, where colleges were also well established, the resemblances are superficial. In both these universities as elsewhere abroad, the colleges were much more closely linked with the faculties and government of the university, and run by them' (McConica, 1986, p. 68). Even if the differences are not quite as stark as McConica suggests (see Cobban, 1975, p. 131) the continental colleges faded in response to the revolutionary forces that emerged first in France and then spread throughout Europe in the nineteenth century (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 136–138).

Thus in England the colleges retained and developed a critical teaching function whereas on the continent, as the medieval world crumbled, responsibility for teaching was increasingly centralised within the universities. Regardless of how this

T. Tapper, D. Palfreyman, *Oxford, the Collegiate University*, Higher Education Dynamics 34, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0047-5_6,

historical conundrum is resolved, Rose and Ziman felt sufficiently confident, in their insightful *Camford Observed*, to conclude that:

> Oxford and Cambridge are the most famous universities in the English-speaking world. In particular they are the most famous *teaching* universities. They are supposed to possess some special and unique method for getting intellects to sparkle, for filling heads with knowledge, for making undergraduates big with wisdom.
>
> (Rose & Ziman, 1964, p. 59)

Some 30 years later, although some may want to equivocate as to the general standing of Oxbridge, their reputation as teaching universities remains high. And undoubtedly so much of that reputation is built upon the continuing collegial input into teaching; the colleges are not simply halls of residences.

The fact that the colleges make a considerable input into undergraduate teaching in the collegiate model of the university is critical to its preservation. Collegiate universities have a federal model of governance, which is built around various institutional compromises: undergraduate admissions and residence (historically responsibilities of the colleges), examinations (historically a responsibility of the university) and teaching (historically a shared responsibility). So to shift the balance of responsibilities for teaching will not only tell us something about the changing character of the teaching and learning process but also tell us much about the changing balance of power within the federal system. In the words of Oxford's Franks Commission: 'It is the central feature of college life that residence and teaching are welded together. A college has to provide more than bed and board: it has to be *the centre* for the intellectual activities which are the chief purpose for which the young men and women are at the university at all' (University of Oxford, 1966a, pp. 100–101). If you reduce the colleges' responsibilities for teaching then you are in danger of removing them from their critical place at the very centre of the undergraduate's intellectual life. To put it starkly, at any one point in time the organisation of teaching within the federal university reflects the outcome of a power struggle between its constituent parts, the University and its colleges.

In his powerful interpretation of the restructuring of the University of Oxford in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Engel has forcefully reminded us that the college tutors were keen to assert their role as both scholars and tutors (Engel, 1983, p. 103). While teaching was the primary educational duty, 'the obligation to support learned research was accepted as a secondary function of the university' (Engel, 1983, p. 189). The pursuit of scholarship was a desirable way of ameliorating the image of college tutors as mere teaching drudges. Presumably, besides enhancing their self-image, it differentiated them positively from the public school masters who provided an alternative career model for some Oxbridge graduates. The acceptance of this linkage still persists and has been expressed forcefully in many of the contemporary debates stimulated by the restructuring of British higher education. Not surprisingly, its persistence at Oxford has been especially pronounced. To quote the Franks Commission again: 'The representatives of the colleges, like those of the faculties, were agreed, as can be seen in their oral evidence, that research and teaching were best done by the same people. The teaching in the colleges would not

be so good unless those doing it were also engaged in original research' (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 99). While present-day opinion might concur with such sentiments, it might also argue that the reverse process of enrichment (that is from teaching to research) is more problematic.

What this preliminary thinking about teaching in the collegiate universities reveals is the deeper ramifications of any interpretation of the teaching and learning process. How pedagogy is structured inevitably conveys broad socio-political messages, even shaping how we understand the meaning of higher education. This chapter will develop this central contention by presenting a brief introduction to the rise of tutorial teaching, to be followed by a longer analysis of Oxford's 'love affair' with the tutorial. It will then address more directly what those critical socio-political messages may be and whether – and in what form – the tutorial is likely to survive in the context of a changed, and still changing, environment. Can the idea of the tutorial, like the idea of collegiality itself, be stretched and yet still retain a core meaning?

The Rise of Tutorial Teaching

Although the Oxbridge colleges shared teaching responsibilities with their respective Universities, it was not until the nineteenth century that Oxbridge's distinctive contribution to pedagogy, the college tutorial, emerged in its present form (tutorials at Oxford, supervisions at Cambridge). While it is unwise to make too sweeping an assertion, it is evident that as the eighteenth century progressed that both Universities, along with most of their colleges, shamefully neglected their responsibilities towards teaching and learning. Oxbridge fell into disrepute, stimulating its ardent critics to call for parliamentary intervention. While most historians concur with the judgement that the rebirth of the ancient universities owed much to parliamentary action, they also point to the impact of internally driven reforms. The most far-reaching changes centred on the examination system: examinations became more rigorous, written examinations were introduced and class lists were published. In essence, the examination process was partially rationalised, made highly competitive and became more amenable to public scrutiny. University-wide reforms were complemented by changes in some of the more progressive colleges, invariably nudged into action by far-sighted heads acting in concert with a cadre of reform-minded fellows. For example, in spite of bitter internal conflict in the first part of the nineteenth century, Oriel College eased existing restrictions upon the election of fellows, moving towards selection by merit. And at about the same time a group of New College and Balliol tutors started to regenerate the commitment of the colleges to teaching.

If examination reform was the pebble that stimulated change, then innovations in the teaching and learning process were the ripple effect. While the social status of most of the gentlemen commoners was assured and even if they felt the need for a degree then a mere pass would suffice, many of the scholars were not so favoured. They required a good degree, or even the opportunities afforded by a

college fellowship, to make their way in the wider world. Thus competition was both intensified and made more precarious by the reformed examination process. Where was the ambitious scholar to look for help? Few of the unreformed colleges would have inspired confidence. The inevitable consequence was the emergence of the private coach who, although often despised in official college circles, fulfilled – and often admirably fulfilled – a glaring need.

What could the ambitious scholar acquire from his private coach that he would be most unlikely to obtain from his college tutor? Although Curthoys, in his research into the 'unreformed' colleges, makes the point that there is disputed evidence as to precisely how many Oxford undergraduates used private coaches, and indeed whether they were really needed at all, he concludes: 'But for "reading" men private tutors offered two facilities which could not be generally obtained from their college tutors: specialised tuition and individual attention' (Curthoys, 1997a, p. 151). And the same was true of Cambridge where the coaches not only offered academic competence and rigorous training but also the student 'could expect from the coach the warm and personal interest which college officers failed to provide' (Rothblatt, 1968, p. 200). While such a claim may be too sweeping, the provision of private tuition was a competitive marketplace in which the competence of the tutors was measured by the examination success of their students. Either the coach delivered results or his fees were in jeopardy for there were others waiting in the wings to take his place. The publication of the class lists was therefore as much a trial for the private coaches as for their students.

Whilst there may have been no inevitability about the eventual demise of the private coach, it is difficult to imagine that this state of affairs could continue indefinitely. The very futures of the two collegiate universities were at stake, either they reformed or they stagnated. With the wisdom of hindsight the reinstatement of the colleges as the major focus of teaching and learning under the guidance of the college tutors seemed the most logical outcome to the reform of the ancient English universities. Not only were the tutors a large organised interest (the Tutors Association was convened in 1852 at Oriel College in direct response to the creation of the first nineteenth century Royal Commission) but also their pre-eminence was assured by the emergence of new social forces. Like the public schools in the latter half of the nineteenth century, both Oxford and Cambridge were responding to the needs of an expanding bourgeoisie that was intent on using education to sustain its newly won social status. The clerical party represented a declining past while 'the endowment of research' party constituted an interest whose time had yet to arrive. In the meantime, it was the day of the college tutor.

The consequence was that the college tutors secured for themselves a respected career built upon teaching and the pursuit of scholarship while the colleges were reinvigorated as centres of national learning. Although the collegial ties to the established church were steadily eroded, there remained – at least for the time being – a favoured place for the gentleman commoner. What the colleges offered the bourgeoisie was not simply an academic education but the possibility of acquiring a highly valued form of cultural capital, the possession of which almost guaranteed rich returns in the job market. The colleges were integral to the process through

which the student acquired the correct cultural capital, and intrinsic to college life was a teaching and learning experience built around the tutorial system. When Rose and Ziman trumpet Oxbridge's fame as *teaching* universities they are recognising the powerful allure of the college tutorial. It is the tutorial that has been given the credit for stimulating 'intellects to sparkle', of filling 'heads with knowledge' and imparting 'great wisdom'.

It is critical to remember that the college tutorial was not merely a pedagogical method, the best means of giving untutored undergraduates a higher education. Tutorials also provided the context for moral instruction; although the moral flavour could be either religious (Newman) or secular (Jowett), the purpose was to impart social values as well as learning. The dons, like the public school masters, were acquiring in the latter half of the nineteenth century the role of *in loco parentis*. So, for many well-heeled Victorian parents the purchase of an Oxbridge education represented not only a sound economic investment but also a vital stage in the *rite de passage* of their male offspring, the best means of making them both economically secure and worthy citizens.

The Long Love Affair

Throughout the past century in which the tutorial system has taken root in Oxbridge, the belief that it remains a highly effective pedagogical method has persisted. For example, in 1909 Oxford's Chancellor, Lord Curzon, was moved to observe: '... if there is any product of which Oxford has special reason to be proud, which has stamped its mark on the lives and characters of generations of men, and has excited the outspoken envy of other nations, it is that wonderful growth of personal tuition which has sprung up in our midst almost unawares...' (Curzon, 1909, p. 122). Some 60 years later, the Franks Inquiry gave its own powerful endorsement:

> At its heart is a theory of teaching young men and women to think for themselves. The undergraduate is sent off to forage for himself.... and to produce a coherent exposition of his ideas on the subject set. The essay or prepared work is then read by its author and criticized by the tutor.
>
> In this discussion the undergraduate should benefit by struggling to defend the positions he has taken up, by realizing the implications of the argument, and by glimpsing the context in which a more experienced scholar sees his problem.
>
> (University of Oxford, 1966a, pp. 101–102)

In a very similar vein, we read in the North Report that the tutorial system 'encourages the student to take an active rather than passive role in learning and develops skills in self-directed study and working independently, as well as analytical and critical skills', and, moreover, it provides the undergraduate with 'the opportunity to discuss particular topics in considerable detail with the tutor, who may well be a leading expert in the subject or a young active researcher at the forefront of the discipline...' (University of Oxford, 1997a, pp. 163–164). And vice-chancellors, especially in Oration speeches, have felt no need to be coy: 'A properly organised tutorial is the *best method ever devised* for training minds and exposing fallacies.

Generations of Oxford graduates owe their subsequent success in life to their tutors', and, while there may be shortcomings, 'None of this detracts from *the special excellence* of the tutorial or the esteem in which it deserves to be held' (Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, 1988, 17 October). In his incoming Address the current vice chancellor referred to Oxford's 'commitment to excellence' and concluded the list of virtues with, 'And excellence in those twin Oxford jewels, the collegiate structure and the tutorial system' (University of Oxford, 2009, 7 October). And to complete the story, one of the authors of this book has edited *The Oxford Tutorial* (New College's homage to tutorial teaching), which significantly has the sub-title, '*Thanks, you taught me how to think',* and is due to appear – illustrating the international fascination with the topic – in a Chinese edition (Palfreyman, 2008a).

How is this protracted love affair to be explained? There are two key elements. First, as the quotations we have presented demonstrate, there is a very powerful sentiment within Oxbridge that tutorials are an immensely effective pedagogical tool. Second, like the idea of collegiality itself, as this chapter will show, the tutorial has proven to be an exceedingly flexible concept. This is in spite of the fact that there is considerable consistency in the debate about both their supposed virtues and how they should function – teaching undergraduates how to think critically through the constructive intellectual interaction of tutor and undergraduate(s). Therefore, as with the idea of collegiality, we have to reflect on how far the tutorial as a pedagogical tool can be stretched before it fails to achieve its central purpose.

In the classical model the student is advised by a tutorial fellow or (at Cambridge) by the Director of Studies who arranges his or her programme of tuition. Ideally the tutor is a teaching fellow of the student's own college and they meet weekly, one –to one, to analyse a piece of work prepared by the student (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 101). Even if this ideal model exists, there is far less certainty as to the precise conduct of a tutorial, although there is a measure of consensus as to how they should *not* proceed. There is widespread agreement that tutorials should *not* be used either to cover the full syllabus or to convey only factual information, and certainly tutors should not impose their own interpretations upon their tutees. On the contrary, the tutorial is perceived as a forum in which an exchange of views occurs; the tutor is a participant rather than an authority figure. Furthermore, as tutorial discussion is centred around the student's reading aloud a prepared essay, he or she has a significant say in determining the pace and direction of the analysis (Moore, 1968, pp. 15–23; Stewart, 1968).

What are the qualities that this process instils? Franks argued that undergraduates were taught 'to think for their themselves': that in the process of preparing their weekly essays they learnt how 'to forage' independently and 'to produce a coherent exposition' of their own ideas; however, in the course of the tutorial hour itself they acquired the ability 'to defend' the positions they had adopted in face of the tutor's critique. All this was re-iterated by the North Commission, which also added, in genuflection to the emerging concern with 'transferable skills': 'to gain experience in debating' and 'to develop effective oral communications skills' (University of Oxford, 1997a, p. 164).

For the tutor the teaching situation itself may bring its own rewards (especially at Oxbridge where the students are likely to be both talented and motivated) and, should the examination results of your tutees be especially good, it is not unreasonable to suspect that this is direct consequence of your skilled teaching. Inevitably, the occasional tutor is bound to allude to the deep insights that have been revealed during the course of an undergraduate tutorial, but one suspects that for every time this occurs there have been literally thousands of tutorials in which the hour follows well-trodden paths. Does the occasional flash of insight compensate for this large expenditure of teaching energy? If the teaching experience itself is considered by the tutor to be rewarding presumably the reply is positive; otherwise one suspects that the answers would be more circumspect.

Undoubtedly, central to the longevity of the tutorial system has been its flexibility as a pedagogical method. Whereas the Franks Inquiry maintained that tutorial teaching could succeed only when 'the tutor takes undergraduates singly, or in pairs' (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 102), it is clear that tutorial teaching has become in some cases little more than small-group teaching. For example, while the North Commission found that only a very small proportion of tutorials 'had four or more students attending' (University of Oxford, 1997a, p. 163), it was still prepared to describe these as tutorials. Furthermore, the proportions are not as small as the North Report implies because its own evidence shows that some 17.3% of Oxford undergraduates were taking tutorials with four or more students and only 25.0% were in single-student tutorials (University of Oxford, 1997b, Table 1.9, p. 378).

While the development of inter-collegiate lecturing was a nineteenth century innovation, the trend towards undergraduates taking tutorials at Oxford with either a fellow of another college or a non-fellow (mainly a graduate student) is a more recent growth. The Franks Inquiry revealed that in Michelmas Term 1964, 67% of undergraduates received tutorial supervision from a fellow and/or lecturer of their own college (University of Oxford, 1966b, Table 104, p. 123), whereas the North Commission shows that in the Hilary Term of 1996 the same figure ranged from 64.8% for the wealthier colleges to 55.4% for the poorer colleges (University of Oxford, 1997b, Table 1.10, p. 379). The evidence suggests that while most students may continue to receive the majority of their tutorials in their own colleges, it is sometimes a close-run thing. Moreover, although the North Commission may feel that the graduate student can justifiably be described as 'a young active researcher at the forefront of the discipline', she or he may in reality be little more than a conveniently located and relatively cheap source of untrained and untested academic labour. However, it is more than possible that energy and enthusiasm may compensate for experience and potential *ennui*.

In 'An Open Letter to the Chairman of the North Commission', a group of college fellows argued, ' .... our combined experience suggests that to use a Cambridge expression, the "director of studies" element of what we do is *the cornerstone* of the tutorial system. With a model of this kind, it is possible to regard the senior academic as at *the centre* of tutorial teaching, whilst also paying heed to the value of a reasonable proportion of that teaching being undertaken by junior academics, including graduate students' (Edwards et al., 1997, p. 3, emphasis added). However,

if the key, and indeed only variable explicitly defined, is who is in control of the system then it is possible to imagine that the model of tutorial teaching could be stretched indefinitely. And it is not surprising to find that the 'Open Letter' offers a very liberal interpretation of what constitutes tutorial teaching:

> There is certainly no intention on our part of supporting the idea that this must necessarily involve the one-to-one tutorial with an essay read by the undergraduate to the tutor and commented upon by the latter . . . .*we believe that our system encourages tutors to use and develop their own teaching methods and styles.*
>
> (Edwards et al., 1997, p. 3, emphasis added)

Notwithstanding the flexibility of tutors, and some science tutors succeeded in the inter-war years in structuring their weekly college tutorials around an essay read out by the student (Morrell, 1997, pp. 59–63), it is obvious that the tutorial as a teaching methodology had to adjust to the differing requirements of contrasting academic disciplines. Tutors had little choice but to develop 'their own teaching methods and styles' for they could not teach their disciplines without such adjustments. Indeed, some tutors have conducted the tutorial hour so idiosyncratically that they have not even remained in the same room as the tutee: 'He would summon me for a tutorial late at night, then announce that he was going to have a bath. I was on no account to stop reading my essay, as he could hear perfectly well from the bathroom if I raised my voice a little' (John C.E.Hyde, 1997, p. 31). Such anecdotes reinforce Heim's penetrating observations that a tutorial can be akin to a session of psychotherapy (Heim, 1976, p. 54).

One suspects that such faintly absurd behaviour is very much the exception in today's politically correct environment – perhaps to the detriment of happy memories of donnish eccentricity to be recounted 30 years on at the college gaudy. More significant, however, are the variations that are a consequence of the different characters of the academic disciplines. For example, while the tutorial system may lend itself to the teaching of mathematics, such tutorials cannot be built around a weekly essay. And what is true of mathematics is also true of the pure and applied sciences. For these disciplines tutorials are likely to be centred around problem-solving exercises and, although Morrell's work on the growth of science at Oxford in the inter-war years points to a more-or-less successful reconciliation of the scientists to the tutorial system, these were scientists who were committed to a liberal scientific education. While they may have been distinguished in particular scientific fields, their teaching was often very broad in its scope: 'To have sent pupils elsewhere for specialised teaching by experts would have been deemed "dreadfully provincial" by tutors who were concerned with education not instruction' (Morrell, 1997, p. 62). With the explosion of knowledge and the increasing specialisation within disciplines one suspects that today few tutorials, in either the sciences or the humanities, conclude with the playing of piano duets (Morrell, 1997, p. 62)!

While the following exchange, drawn from the seminar series, *The History of the University of Oxford in the Twentieth Century*, may not convey the whole truth about contemporary science tutorials, it certainly paints a different picture from Morrell's 'romantic' description:

> **Williams** (Royal Society Napier Research Professor, Oxford): ' …. the thing that has changed since the war to the present time [1986] in science, is the amount of information and the change in even conceptual background that is required through all the sciences. Suddenly there is a bank of knowledge which you need before you're at the research level, or at the level at which you can discuss things at the forefront of knowledge, which is not really reached by an undergraduate . . .and this means that a lot of the teaching is repetitive . . .you know if you talk to most tutors who have done it, they say 'yes, I do *exactly* the same tutorial seven times a week on the same topic'.
>
> **Urmson** (Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy at Corpus Christi, Oxford, 1959–1978): 'They're bad tutors: they're *terrible* tutors'.
>
> **Williams**: 'They're not. They are not. It does happen now to the scientists that they are trapped, that they have to teach basic material which could easily be taught in a class structure . . . and it's a load which in the end they resent, as they're doing it again and again. . .'.
> (*History of the University of Oxford in the 20th century*, 1986, 24 January, p. 21)

But it is unwise to generalise, for the tutorial still has its strong advocates amongst some of the contemporary Oxford scientists, although it is seen as but one input into the learning process of the undergraduate scientist (Allison, 1998, pp. 3–4). Two of the contributions to Palfreyman's *The Oxford Tutorial: 'Thanks you taught me how to think'* are science tutors and naturally supportive of tutorial teaching, although it is difficult to gauge how representative they are of their science colleagues, and certainly the tutorial experiences of Richard Dawkins were very unique indeed.

However, there are some pertinent statistics that imply that perhaps even in the arts and social sciences the character of the tutorial may be subtly changing. While both the Franks and North Commissions of Inquiry were convinced of the positive benefits of tutorial teaching, they were also convinced that there was too much tutorial teaching. A point that has been made repeatedly by perhaps the best-known contemporary defender of the collegial system and collegial values, J.R. Lucas (Lucas, 1993, 1996). The Franks Report found that on average Oxford undergraduates had received 1.5 tutorials in each week of the Michelmas Term of 1964. There was a widespread feeling that this was too heavy a burden upon both tutors (overteaching) and undergraduates (too many rushed essays). The Franks Report squarely laid the responsibility at the doorstep of the tutors: they were using tutorials to cover the syllabus and were anxious to ensure that their students were as well prepared as they could be for their examinations (University of Oxford, 1966a, pp. 108–109). Matters had not improved by the 1990s because Oxford had not acted upon Franks' recommendations to cut the tutorial load. The North Commission reported a mean of 3.27 tutorials per undergraduate per fortnight in the Hilary Term of 1995 with little differentiation by subject (University of Oxford, 1997b, pp. 377–378). Like the Franks Inquiry, the North Commission stressed the influence of examination pressures but also argued that failings in secondary schooling were forcing Oxford to use the tutorials to bring the first year students up to scratch (University of Oxford, 1997a, p. 166). If so, then this would change the purpose of the tutorial (from enhancing critical thinking to providing remedial teaching), whereas tutorial overload could undermine its pedagogical quality. However, without detailed historical

research it is difficult to make categorical judgements about changes in quality over time, and perhaps the more significant contemporary comparison is how an Oxford undergraduate education matches up to that experienced in other higher education institutions.

From the perspective of the tutors, although there may still be support for tutorial teaching, it is evident from the widespread complaints picked up by the North Inquiry that many of them are finding their teaching an undue burden. If it has become such a burden, it is pertinent to ask why tutors failed to act on Franks' recommendation that the load should be lightened? There are several possible explanations that illustrate the pressures teaching fellows face: invidious comparisons may be made with practices in other colleges with undergraduates – as consumers – leading the complaints, the fear of being branded negligent and self-serving, and the possibility that finals results may indeed deteriorate with a deleterious impact upon the college's position in the Norrington Table with a negative impact upon recruitment. But, even if a symbiotic relationship between teaching and research can be proven, should the demands of teaching become too strenuous then inevitably it will interfere with the individual tutor's ability to undertake research. However, it is difficult not to believe that a critical status variable is also at work. Nineteenth century dons clearly did far *more* tutorial teaching than today's tutors, but then there was not the same expectation that they would undertake research and, notwithstanding Engel's observations on teaching drudgery, many dons saw teaching as a worthy pursuit, certainly one that gave them status both in Oxford and in the wider Victorian society. But now it is research and the associated trappings of publications, conferences and prizes that deliver academic status, not teaching.

But if the tutors are overburdened, what of the undergraduates? Given the North Report records (University of Oxford, 1997b, Table 1.12, p. 379) that undergraduates spent a considerable amount of time preparing for tutorials (an average of 12.64 hours per tutorial, ranging from 6.67 hours for first year science undergraduates to a massive 16.28 hours for fourth year arts undergraduates), then they continued to exercise a major control on how undergraduates spent their time. But whether this was time spent undertaking independent research that would form the basis of a considered essay or its equivalent, or whether it represented time spent stressfully putting together another rushed essay ('. . . much of life as a tutor has been wasted listening to rushed essays in which a rapid regurgitation of unassimilated argument has clearly left the pupil's mind untouched' – Lucas, 1993, p. 2) is a moot point. Moreover, if tutors are increasingly using tutorials for examination coaching and/or helping first-year students to enhance their attainment levels, then they are clearly not engaging students in, for example, a measured discussion about differing interpretations of evidence, assuming that it is even realistic to attempt this with undergraduate students in many disciplines. But the fact remains that, *regardless of what is actually being learnt*, most undergraduates and tutors continue to feel very positive, in spite of specific reservations, about the tutorial system. Which either goes to show the continuing pull of powerful ideas or demonstrates that, regardless of how the tutorial system has evolved over time, enough of its ideals continue to be realised in practice to satisfy those who matter most – the teachers and the taught.

The Sociology and Politics of Pedagogy

Some Social Dimensions

Oxford's 'long love affair' with the tutorial system was constructed upon pedagogical considerations. However, from its inception the tutorial was something more than a pedagogical method. In a seminar entitled, 'Tutorials in Oxford Since 1945', Lord Bullock, former vice-chancellor of the University, remarked:

> It does seem to me that this is one of the big changes in the tutorial system, that you are teaching subjects rather than people. And the old view of the tutorial *was* very much founded, I suppose, upon the idea that you established a relationship. I never thought tutorials were a system, I always thought they were a relationship, and that in this way you had an influence upon and learnt a great deal about [the student].
> (*History of the University of Oxford in the 20th Century,* 1986, 14 February 14, pp. 16–17)

And Bullock continued by arguing that the change had been brought about by increasing specialisation within disciplines. Students were now taught by more tutors than had been true in his undergraduate days, making it harder to establish relationships. Bullock's interesting observation smacks of that world in which tutors were at one time as much moral guardians as they were teachers. No longer controlling the students' purse strings and paying the tradesmen's bills (as in the nineteenth century) but still central to the development of well-rounded individuals. The length to which the relationship could be taken is perhaps best exemplified by those summer reading parties, be it to the Continent or to the more rural and remoter parts of the British Isles.

It should also be remembered that until comparatively recently most college tutors were scarcely older than their undergraduates and it was not unknown for them to have been promised a fellowship even before they graduated. Certainly the pursuit of postgraduate studies and taking a higher degree was not part of the academic career structure until after the First World War, and even then it took some time for it to take root in Oxbridge. And it was widely believed that the best tutors were those who were still fired by the enthusiasm of youth. In this context it is possible to understand the continental jaunts and the Lake District reading parties. But, nonetheless, even in today's less leisurely and more family-centred world the college tutor must have relationships with tutees for they are an unavoidable part of the teaching experience. What has changed is the context within which those relationships unfold. One tutor we interviewed revealed that he now conducted his tutorials with his office door ajar; the arrival of women has clearly changed the social dynamics of the tutorials for some fellows. And almost certainly none of them now take baths – even if in an adjoining room – while conducting tutorials!

It stands to reason that relationships within the tutorial setting will vary, for so much of the teaching situation is based upon the interaction of personalities, and personalities differ. Interestingly, although the tutorial is seen as an intrinsic part of the collegial tradition, in fact it devolves an enormous amount of responsibility to the individual tutor. While the tutor's behaviour may be governed by convention

there appears to be no formal rules prescribing what can or cannot be done. Halsey has written, ' . . .. the tutorial system itself has the same *gemeinschaft* as opposed to *gesellschaft* quality on which charisma is more likely to flourish' (Halsey, 1995, p. 171). But this is to place the system at the mercy of the individual tutor rather than to control it collegially. The development of inter-collegiate lectures, as well as the need to call upon tutors in other colleges to teach your students, would suggest that boundaries – formal and informal – emerged and individuals were expected to work within them. The suggestion is that the conduct of tutorials has become more routinised over time and eccentricity (even charisma) slowly squeezed out the system.

While Halsey has claimed that tutorials can provide a forum for the charismatic personality, 'It is, however, the second type of personality, the cultivated person who carries authority sanctioned by custom and tradition, which is historically most characteristic of Oxford at least since the Reformation'. And in Halsey's judgement, in spite of the rise of the academic specialist (the trained expert), and a world increasingly driven by meritocratic values, ' . . .the cultivated person remains an ideal, and the college, as distinct from the university, his refuge' (Halsey, 1995, p. 171). Although there is a powerful element of truth in Halsey's analysis, it could be argued that the nineteenth century reforms suggest an interesting amalgam of the idea of the expert and of the cultivated person: the cultivated person as expert. The learning instilled by the tutorial system, centred around a liberal education, amounted to a rigorous training of the mind. The purpose may have been to educate gentlemanly scholars but it was not to create a leisured class; the generalist as colonial administrator could turn his mind, and indeed his hand if need be (remember Orwell *did* shoot the elephant – thanks to Eton rather than Oxford or Cambridge), to accomplish all sorts of practical tasks. Moreover, an Oxbridge education was no bar to a professional career, which would have required at least a measure of expertise as well as the desired cultural style to ensure success. Many of Jowett's young men may have been classicists but they were trained to serve and most definitely not to be idle or incompetent.

The tutorial system took root in an era prior to the fragmentation of knowledge and college tutors could cover the full range of their disciplines. Indeed, they were expected to do so because colleges invariably lacked the resources to appoint a number of specialist fellows in any one discipline. Moreover, they had little incentive to do so – regardless of how rapidly a particular discipline was developing – if few students sought admission to read that subject in their college. The idea of a liberal education, as a rounded learning experience led by generalists, therefore had much to do with particular historical circumstances as any deep-seated pedagogical arguments. Therefore, although Halsey has claimed that, 'the cultivated person remains an ideal', one wonders how deeply embedded this supposed ideal is still planted within the tradition of tutorial teaching or indeed within the collegial tradition itself. There has been an explosion of knowledge, which simply makes it impossible for anyone to keep abreast of the full range of developments in most disciplines. This has been intensified by the pressures to carry out research, which demands a specialisation not implied by the idea of scholarship. In the face of these pressures it is

reasonable to ask what future there is for the ideal of the cultivated person. Both the collegial tradition and tutorial teaching can survive in this new world, but obviously a narrowly defined ideal of the cultivated person (who, incidentally, was always a cultivated *man*) cannot.

Not surprisingly, the defenders of the ideal of the cultivated person are not giving up without a fight. Besides powerfully expressing his opposition to tutorial overload ('Of all the problems facing Oxford at present, that of Too Many Tutorials is the most fundamental' – Lucas, 1996, p. 5), J.R. Lucas is also firmly committed to the 'generalist' camp and makes, what to some must be, a very surprising claim:

> We do not need to know the subjects we teach - often we teach better those subjects we do not know, for then not only do we not over-burden the pupil with more information than he can assimilate, but we show him how someone starting from a position of ignorance like himself, can tackle an unfamiliar problem. . . .it is good for tutors to be generalists in their teaching, and to cover the whole of the syllabus.
>
> (Lucas, 1996, p. 5)

And, with particular respect to science teaching, Wade Allison has also strongly argued that 'non-specialist' tutorial teaching is of benefit to both tutor and taught: if the teaching is highly specialised the tutor learns nothing new and teaching soon becomes a chore while 'the non-specialist' tutorial enriches the intellectual experience of both teacher and taught. Pursuing a parallel line of argument to Lucas, Allison argues that tutorials taken by non-specialists are especially rewarding 'to both tutor and pupil' when the tutor admits the lack of detailed knowledge and then demonstrates how to remedy this (Allison, 1998, pp. 3–4). This is a perfectly reasonable line to take, and one suspects that in most disciplines the basic undergraduate building blocks could be taught by all tutors, and that, furthermore, it is not essential to have researched a field in-depth before one has the right to teach it. However, as regrettable as it may be, the fact remains that increasingly academics *are* specialists and that narrowly defined options have become a major part of most disciplines and thus of most curricula. Ironically, the best defence against academic over-specialisation may depend on developments in research because in certain fields it is strongly argued that the most exciting research possibilities are to be found at the edges of disciplines where they overlap with one another (Williams, 1996, pp. 3–5). But this takes us some way from the education of the undergraduate.

Although both the Franks and North Commissions present evidence to show that there is widespread satisfaction with tutorials amongst Oxford's undergraduates, it is difficult not to avoid the impression that it is designed for the gifted and, although defended on pedagogical grounds, it also attracts attention because it makes Oxbridge different. It would be interesting to know who accompanied the tutors on the grand tours and the reading parties. One suspects that it was either the brilliant scholars or the Sebastian Flytes (Harvie, 1976, p. 58). But where did this leave the worthy commoners? For example, in the late nineteenth century one anonymous Balliol contributor to *Macmillan's Magazine* (February 1896) remarked bitterly of Jowett, whom it should be remembered was a key figure in developing the tutorial system, that: 'It was said by the irreverent that if a man were a peer, a profligate, or a pauper the Master would be sure to take him up; and one sees

now the reason that underlay such a method of selection; the physician applying himself to those who were sick' (as quoted in Faber, 1957, p. 173). Was the tutorial in part a nurturing process for the academically gifted and the eccentric, and a socio-psychological experience as well as a pedagogical process?

Contemporarily Richard Dawkins, the very distinguished biologist and recently retired Fellow of New College, in the course of a strong defence of tutorials has written:

> Each week my tutorial assignment was to read one D.Phil thesis. My essay was to be a combination of D.Phil examiner's report, proposal for follow-up research, review of the history of the subject in which the thesis fell, and theoretical and philosophical discussion of the issues that the thesis raised.
>
> (Dawkins, 1996, p. 6)

But most decidedly this is *not* the staple diet of the average tutorial, even Oxbridge tutorial. Obviously, and this is very much to its credit, the system is sufficiently flexible – or was in Dawkins' undergraduate days – to cater for a very exceptional mind, but the tutorial system *cannot* be defended on the grounds of what it apparently did for someone as talented as Richard Dawkins. The defence of the tutorial system has to be built around what it does for the intelligent undergraduate rather than the supremely gifted. Most Oxford graduates will go on to live worthy lives underwritten by respectable bourgeois occupations, access to which is best secured by demonstrated academic competence rather than either the exhibition of gentlemanly virtues or astounding intellectual gifts. The tutorial is an integral part of the means by which that competence is obtained because it instills the quality of critical thinking rather than outstanding brilliance.

Some Political Dimensions

As long as tutorials remain central to an Oxbridge education, then the colleges will continue to exercise considerable influence over the teaching process. But whether the colleges could be said to control that process, even for the arts students, is becoming increasingly problematic. For a long time it has been necessary to think of a shared college input into teaching and the assumption that each individual college controls the teaching of its own undergraduates by providing the teaching resources for them is increasingly unviable. There will still be students to whom this applies but once tutorial teaching is farmed out, be it to the fellows of other colleges or to graduate students, then a measure of control is inevitably ceded. The intercollegiate input into college teaching has always been important and never more so. Furthermore, the evidence points to a mixed pattern of teaching at Oxbridge; a combination of tutorials, lectures, demonstrations and seminars/classes, much of which is the responsibility of the departments/faculties rather than the colleges.

It is also important to ask what are the *critical elements* within this mixed pattern. How really crucial for the average student in the laboratory-based disciplines are tutorials as opposed to demonstrations? Would it be possible to cover the essential building blocks within the sciences without extensive lecture courses? Is it not true

that within the sciences the syllabuses are generally defined by the lecture courses? To what extent does tutorial teaching provide an interesting and, perhaps for some students (the below average or the exceptionally gifted?), a critical supplementary input into the learning process, with the core of the discipline acquired through other means? If, as is often insisted, there should be a better integration of the contrasting teaching methods, usually of lectures and tutorials, is it not likely that the tutorials will be integrated into the lecture series? If so, would the tutorials then provide the forum for the analysis of issues first raised in lectures. The pattern of tutor responses to these questions is likely to be varied, although one suspects that there would be significant clusters within differing disciplines. But such questions do help to focus attention upon an assessment of the *relative* importance of tutorial teaching and how important the colleges really are in any overall judgement of the varying inputs into the teaching process.

It is not surprising to learn that in the sciences, once the students start to take specialist courses, the colleges are especially in danger of being unable to provide the requisite teaching: 'Once they specialise, the department has to guarantee to supply the teaching expertise – and college tutors have collectively agreed that departmental classes were the only way to meet the load' (Professor Clarke, Head of the Department of Engineering Sciences, as quoted in Topping, 1997, p. 25). Moreover, faculty-based groups in the arts are now more likely to discuss syllabus reform, including the structure of the curriculum, and the concern is not simply whether the tutorial system is too time consuming but also how effective it is as a teaching method. At Cambridge such scepticism has already led to changes:

> In History, for example, the teaching of 'Themes and Sources' is built around faculty-based classes and seminars rather than traditional lectures. The intention is to bring more students into the Faculty and to encourage more interaction among the students. *Attendance is compulsory and there are no college supervisions* Inevitably this has brought a shift towards more faculty-based teaching.
>
> (Gregson, 1993, p. 8; emphasis added)

Where the tutorial may be holding its own it seems to provide a somewhat different learning environment from what students experienced in the past. Moreover, the pressures for change appear to be set in one direction, with the pedagogical balance swinging inexorably away from the traditional tutorial to varying forms of small-group teaching as a means of reinforcing lectures and demonstrations, certainly in the sciences, increasingly in the social sciences if rather less so in the humanities. A final critical consideration at Oxford is the growing influence of its Faculties in the appointment of the CUF lecturers, that is those tutors – mainly in the arts subjects – whose salaries are paid in part by the University and in part by the colleges. Invariably college and faculty interests may be harmoniously reconciled when such appointments are made but the colleges cannot deny that faculty interest. In the long term, therefore, we may see the emergence of a new breed of CUF lecturers whose interests are more firmly located in the faculties than in the colleges. Are these not likely to be less incestuous appointments, more in tune with the values of the academic profession at large and less sympathetic to the values of Oxford's collegiality?

Conclusion: Continuity and Contemporary Challenges

That the *structure* of the tutorial system has changed is beyond dispute: the decline of the one-to-one tutorial, flexibility in the length of tutorials and the widespread use of tutors who are not fellows of the undergraduate's own college or indeed are not even fellows. Whether the *process of teaching and learning* within the tutorial setting has changed substantially is more difficult to discern. Obviously there have always been major departures from the idea that the tutorial should be centred around the discussion of an essay previously written, and then read out, by the student. Given such a decentralised system of teaching precisely what occurred in tutorials would vary from tutor to tutor with some students suffering, or perhaps enjoying, very esoteric experiences. But one suspects that maverick tutors in general are in decline and that the character of the tutorial experience is driven more by the nature of the discipline than by anything else. There is no reason why the creative dialogue between tutor and tutee should not continue to flourish but one suspects that for the most part the participants are invariably covering – as they have always done – the mainstream of a subject rather than exploring its frontiers. Moreover, it is critical not to overlook the fact that the competence of tutors will vary as will the intelligence and motivation of students. And even if there should be prescriptions, official or conventional, that define the tutorial experience in precise terms, these two variables alone would rule out the continuous reproduction of one model. The tutorial is still a relationship and relationships have a way of bending, even breaking, the rules.

Even if we know what qualities tutorials should develop it is more difficult to demonstrate what they actually achieve. It may force students to organise their study time in a manner that not only requires them to research a topic in depth but also to present their evidence in a fashion that stretches them intellectually with subsequent enhancement in the challenging but constructive dialogue of the tutorial setting, and thus enabling their full participation in the academic discourse. But this may have become a process – thanks to tutorial overload – that encourages little more than the diligent search for facts, barely digested and then regurgitated in a hurriedly written essay. But whatever the critics of today's tutorial system may think of its *structure* and *process* it nonetheless remains true that those who have passed through it, *the products* of an Oxbridge education, continue to hold it in high regard. Indeed, one of our interviewees remarked that her students were pedagogical conservatives, deeply suspicious of innovations she had introduced that contradicted their understanding of the model to which a tutorial should conform.

We have argued that almost at the very reformulation of the collegial tradition in the nineteenth century the colleges had to face the challenge of science. In a comparative short space of time there was this immense explosion of knowledge in the pure and applied sciences that the colleges either incorporated or resigned themselves to their marginalisation. As Morrell has admirably demonstrated the colleges were successful at Oxford in drawing the sciences into the framework of college tutorials. But there was no chance of the colleges, in spite of the emergence of college laboratories, avoiding a major haemorrhage of science teaching. The experimental

and observational methodologies of the sciences inevitably gave rise to university laboratories and observatories. The sheer explosion of scientific knowledge, and the need to be exposed to that knowledge in a systematic manner, made the emergence of lecture courses and laboratory-based experimentation inevitable.

However, it would be unwise to draw too sharp a distinction between arts and science as the reflections of Sir Kenneth Dover (both Oxford undergraduate and don as well as President of Corpus Christi College) on his teaching the late 1930s show

> But in addition, of course, one had to go to a great many lectures, mostly on the prescribed texts for Mods and special subjects. This was quite well organised by *the Faculty*, and on quite a big scale, because I remember when I lectured on Thucydides Books 6 and 7, that was a 48 lecture course, three times a week for two terms, and that was *not* anything out of the ordinary on a prescribed text.
>
> (*History of the University Oxford in the 20th Century,* 1986, 14 February, p. 2)

The argument, therefore, is not that all teaching in science has by-passed the colleges or that students in the arts never attended lectures, but that the efficient organisation of so much of science teaching, not to mention its costs, had to be underwritten centrally. Moreover, and this is more contentious, the heart of science teaching is to be found in the lecture theatre and in the laboratory practical while the college tutorial is at the very centre of teaching in the arts; thus the cores and peripheries are reversed

But what is interesting is how tutorial teaching at Oxford has remained a very important ingredient in undergraduate teaching *across the academic spectrum*, but what differs is the balance of inputs. The Franks Report revealed that the number of tutorials received by students in Arts, Social Studies and Sciences differed very little (1.5 per week), but the science students received more lectures (an average of 6.8 per week compared to 3.6 and 3.7 for the arts and social studies students, respectively), and, not surprisingly, the scientists devoted many hours to practicals, a weekly average of 7.5 (University of Oxford, 1966b, Table 95, p. 113). By the 1990s the distributions were not substantially different (University of Oxford, 1997b, Table 1.33, p. 397), and there has certainly not been a shift towards seminars/classes and away from tutorials as the Franks Inquiry advocated, although some would classify a group of tutor plus four students as a seminar rather than as a tutorial.

Pedagogical continuity is demonstrated by the fact that the tutorial system was able to accommodate the expansion of science, although its character was changed, and it has been compelled to co-exist with alternative – and for some disciplines – more significant pedagogical modes. But what are the contemporary challenges and can they also be absorbed? There are three main areas of concern: the shift away from a primary focus upon undergraduate teaching towards the supervision of postgraduates and the pursuit of research; the growing stress upon equipping students with transferable skills to enable them to compete more effectively in the job market; and the financial constraints that the colleges face, which focuses attention upon the costs of the tutorial system.

In our opening chapter, in which we constructed an evolving statistical profile of Oxford, we noted the presence of an expanding army of graduate students (in

fact reinforced by post-doctoral fellows). Although led by the sciences, the arts and social studies have followed in their wake. While the colleges have responded to this development (including, of course, the creation of graduate colleges and the proliferation of college research fellowships), it is indicative of a shift in the balance of Oxford's academic concerns. Within this context tutorials do not disappear but they do assume less significance within the university's overall academic profile. Put simply, the teaching of undergraduates inevitably becomes a somewhat less important interest over time. Integral to this development is the fact that for many academics research is at the centre of their professional lives and, consequently, in many disciplines their research students are more critical to their current academic standing and thus to their future careers. Even if most tutors 'keep the faith,' both the Franks and North Reports noted that many claimed the demands of tutorial teaching cut unduly into the time they would like to devote to research. This is a significant issue given the relationship between research outputs and career trajectories, and the fact that core public funding for research is dependent upon institutional performance in the research assessment exercises, which is reinforced by the fact that the impending cuts in the government's financial support for higher education will fall disproportionately upon teaching.

There is also the question of the qualities that the labour market desires in its recruits and whether teaching at Oxford stimulates such qualities. Interestingly, while setting itself against modularity, this was an issue that the North Inquiry confronted directly:

> Both teaching and assessment methods should be reviewed, with the aim of using a range of methods which would extend the variety of skills which might be developed. In teaching, for instance, more computer-based learning could be introduced to develop IT skills, and undergraduates could be asked more regularly to present papers in classes, to promote presentation skills. Group projects could be introduced to encourage teamwork and leadership.
> (University of Oxford, 1997a, p. 170)

It is legitimate to ask what is to be the role of the college tutorial given these pressures. Are these additional – transferable – skills, to which North refers, to be acquired through other modes of teaching, with the tutorial still seen essentially as a 'training of the mind' If so, then who will do it (a resource problem) and how is the problem of teaching overload, of which all parties complain, to be tackled? Are we on the verge of yet another significant shift in the character of the tutorial system or is it about to assume a reduced profile in Oxford's overall teaching programme?

It could be argued, however, that the concerns of the North Commission were simply misplaced for Oxford's graduates have a particular niche in the job market, which is less dependent upon the kind of skills to which the Commission referred. We have argued that in the nineteenth century, although Oxbridge was not necessarily sympathetic to all the emerging economic forces, it *did* change in ways that allowed it to form a strong relationship with a sufficiently large segment of expanding sectors within the labour market (e.g. the professions – old and new, and the state bureaucracy – at home and overseas), so an Oxbridge education was a desirable commodity in the search for a respectable occupation.

There is evidence (Morley & Aynsley, 2007) that employers continue to be influenced by the reputation of particular higher education institutions. They assume that their graduates are likely to possess the qualities they desire and so, 'The hierarchy of opportunity in the labour market often appeared to correspond to a highly stratified higher education sector' (Morley & Aynsley, 2007, p. 229). But it may be that employers are simply acting rationally because, based on their prior experience, graduates from the so-called elite universities really do possess the qualities they need. And perhaps the tutorial system continues to be central in ensuring that connection in view of the fact that employers stressed the value of 'interpersonal and communication skills.' It may well be that the distinction between 'the expert' and 'the cultivated person' has been drawn too sharply with respect to the contemporary labour market and that finding a decent occupation requires a blend of the two. These are matters for careful research, and while the evidence may suggest the continuing significance of the tutorial as a pedagogical method, it also points to the importance of its relationship to wider societal pressures. In the context of higher education as an economic resource (with state-driven quality assurance mechanisms that assess institutional commitment to the transmission of 'desirable' transferable skills), the tutorial is more difficult to defend solely on the grounds of its pedagogical merits, but it may still transmit valuable sociocultural messages in terms of the demands of the labour market.

Whatever the disagreements stimulated by the collegiate tutorial system, there is one point of agreement – it is expensive! In view of the current global economic crisis, and the subsequent pressure upon government spending given the tranches of public monies devoted to cushioning the effects of the crisis, it is inevitable that government spending will be curtailed in the next financial year, and that higher education can expect no special favours. The recent HEPI report *Oxford and Cambridge – How Different Are They?* noted that 'although the explicit subsidy for college fees was withdrawn in 1998' at the end of the transitional funding period (2008–2009) Oxbridge received 'an additional £1,189 per FTE HEU undergraduate per year at Cambridge with an equivalent figure of £1,469 for Oxford' (Chester & Bekhradnia, 2009, paras. 52, 53), but negotiations are under way to secure the removal of this targeted funding (much of it to support the colleges as historical buildings rather than their tutorial teaching).

However, regardless of the level of public subsidy, there is evidence to show that the colleges underwrite a considerable amount of teaching in Oxford. The 'Report on the second survey of posts funded solely by colleges' (Conference of Colleges, 2010) found that, besides the college input into 763 joint appointments (The Common University Fund – CUF – posts), there were 425.5 posts funded solely by the colleges at a cost of some £6.5 million and amounting to an average of 14.2 posts per college. While all disciplines within the University benefit from this input, the humanities and the social sciences are the strongest beneficiaries. It is not surprising therefore that discussion has been stimulated within Oxford as to whether the tutorial system can be sustained, and if it should continue to be the University's USP (Unique Selling Point) whether this creates a potentially threatening hostage to fortune.

Undoubtedly, any move to abandon tutorials would divide the colleges, so adding to the internal splits that already exist. However, to draw upon one of the central themes of this chapter, the shape of the tutorial has evolved over time and the classical model (a weekly one-hour tutorial composed of the tutor and one undergraduate, in which the student reads out a prepared essay) is a declining (almost defunct) experience. How much further change must there be before the tutorial system evaporates? What is the dividing line between tutorials and seminars as different forms of small-group teaching? Can either form of pedagogy thrive regardless of the number of students that the tutorial or seminar accommodates?

Presumably any abandonment of the tutorial system would be done by sleight of hand – by steady erosion rather than by formal proclamation. Moreover, the financial constraints may be short-lived if the current ceiling on top-up fees is raised or removed. The retention of the tutorial system could be one justification for Oxford to charge disproportionately high fees, with means-tested grants available for those who needed them (with, of course, the agreement of the Office for Fair Access assuming that it survives). And then there are those overseas students who may be quite prepared to pay a very high price indeed to experience a key component of the magic of Oxbridge – the college tutorial.

The tutorial system emerged out of the positive interaction of two sets of powerful interests: the college tutors (the internal force) and the restructuring of Oxbridge as institutions of higher education central to the social reproduction of important segments of the bourgeoisie (the external force). Furthermore, these developments occurred in the shadow of the emergence of the civic universities and, perhaps more significantly, growing political intrusion in the affairs of the universities. The core interests have now parted company: college tutors, like academics in general, do not build their careers around their teaching commitments but Oxbridge's undergraduates still implicitly demand a form of teaching that not only gives them a desirable education but also counts as an important resource in the labour market. However, as the Report of the North Commission implies, teaching at Oxford will have to think carefully about whether the University continues to give its students the skills increasingly demanded by the labour market. Either something akin to the traditional tutorial model, as part of a broader teaching package, may achieve precisely this or perhaps the tutorial system will disappear entirely. However, it is difficult to imagine that the legacy of Oxbridge's prestige alone will continue to secure indefinitely for its undergraduates an edge in the labour market. If the University is not socialising the desired qualities, then sooner or later the emperor will be revealed to have no clothes.

Viewed in this way teaching becomes a means to an end but the tutorial system had great importance in its own right – as the ideal university pedagogy. Why else would it be described as 'the jewel in the crown'? But it should be possible to sustain this mythology while ensuring that tutorials perform practical functions and equally undergraduates could continue to receive different teaching packages, and even different kinds of tutorials dependent upon their needs – that is, both the immediate demands of their academic courses and the long-term pressures of their variegated labour market destinations. That could mean charging a profitable fee

for a premium product, so generating the resources to underwrite the perpetuation of tutorial teaching while also helping to finance the ever more expensive research activities of a university of international standing.

But if the symbiotic relationship between teaching and research becomes increasingly tenuous, and academic career success is ever more centred around the production and dissemination of research, then we have to wonder who is prepared to undertake the tutorial teaching of the future. Will the academic profession split into teaching and research cadres, not necessarily formally recognised faultlines but, nonetheless, carrying with them all the hallmarks of recognition – differentials of salary, working patterns and – most critically – of status? Or will tutorial teaching be steadily farmed out to the edges of the profession: to the graduate students in the guise of job-training or to those on short-term/part-time and untenured contracts as they wait for better things to turn up – or as they slowly come to the realisation that something better will never turn up? Or will teaching become a respectable refuge for the burnt-out researcher, or even those who come to realise that the so-called cutting edge of research is not for them? It is issues such as these, rather than the splitting of hairs between tutorial and small-group (seminar) teaching, that constitute the greatest challenge to the future of tutorial teaching. At present the jewel in the crown may be smaller and more flawed than it once was, but it is not paste – or at least, not yet.

Chapter 7
Governance: A Community of Self-Governing Scholars?

In his college meetings a don enjoyed the delectable illusion of being an architect or a farmer weighing the advantages of a dual-purpose shorthorn herd, bred for both milk and meat, over a herd bred by a cross of Aberdeen Angus on blue grey. He could develop a nose for the balance of a portfolio or of a young claret.

(Noel Annan, 1990)

Introduction

Although the collegial tradition is composed of a range of variables at its very core is the idea of a community of self-governing scholars. While collegial institutions may lack financial resources (brotherhoods of poor scholars) or may not be devoted to the pursuit of learning (committed to saving souls rather than expanding knowledge), the essence of their collegial identity is the ability to determine their own fates, that they are self-governing institutions. The historical evidence demonstrates both the longevity of this idea and its perpetual internal tensions. With reference to Elizabethan Oxford, McConica has illustrated beautifully how the colleges evolved internally to create what he calls 'the collegiate society' (McConica, 1986, pp. 1–68), whilst, equally persuasively, Cross has shown how increasingly they came to serve the dominant interests of the Tudor state (Cross, 1986, pp. 117–149). Asquith, however, argues that the state could not take the pliability of the colleges for granted for '. . . when James II tried to use the College system for a sudden reversal of the traditional religious policy of the Crown, he found in the famous case of Magdalen, Oxford, that his predecessors had helped to create in the College system an instrument so powerful that the King could no longer manipulate it with ease or even with safety. The lesson was sharp and it was not lost on those in power' (Asquith Commission, 1922, p. 14). Although the context is undoubtedly less dramatic, the past 25 years illustrate perfectly this continuing tension between the state and the universities, with Oxford and Cambridge often in the vanguard of the resistance movement.

T. Tapper, D. Palfreyman, *Oxford, the Collegiate University*, Higher Education Dynamics 34, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0047-5_7,

Within the collegiate universities, with their federal systems of governance, the idea of the self-governing community is especially complex, albeit it is this complexity that adds to the analytical fascination. It is not only a question of university autonomy in relation to state and society but also the balance of power within the University. Within the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, what does collegial governance mean given their institutional size and diversity, and with sovereign bodies (Congregation at Oxford and the Regent House at Cambridge) composed of such very large memberships? We have already noted how critical aspects of collegiality (tutorial teaching and undergraduate admissions) can function effectively only if there is considerable inter-collegiate co-operation. These are matters that need to be carefully managed and will require different policy frameworks as circumstances change. How are these ends to be achieved in a manner that is consistent with collegial governance? Then there are the colleges themselves. While their comparative smallness may encourage collegiality in all its forms, their fellows are now subject to more external pressures, which make it increasingly difficult to engage as fully as they may wish in the affairs of the college.

Perhaps of greatest significance is the changing relationship between these levels of governance. The institutional layers share responsibility for key functions, and unless their required co-operation works smoothly, the system will come under pressure, even slide into disrepute. The key problem is the increased external scrutiny to which it is exposed – the need to demonstrate accountability, the competitive mechanisms for the distribution of public research resources, to explain patterns of undergraduate access that in social terms suggest discrimination and to justify a model of governance that does not conform to that of other universities. For some it may appear that too high a price is being paid for the retention of a measure of distinctiveness and that it would be better to centralise policy-making within a more managerially driven and university dominated executive body, and consequently severely limit the functions of the colleges.

In recent years the debate within Oxford about issues of governance has been considerably more pronounced, and more divisive, than appears to be the case at Cambridge. And, not surprisingly, this has generated considerable media attention. However, it should be made clear that all the internal parties are keen to stress their commitment to maintaining Oxford as a collegiate university and all avow their devotion to its collegial tradition. In the chapter on *Continuity and Change in the Collegiate Tradition* we argued that there was a broadly shared idea within the collegiate universities on how the process of change should unfold – it should be internally driven rather than be initiated from the outside, it should be based upon a broad consensus of agreement arrived at through discussion within the universities and it should proceed slowly – building on rather than negating the past. In contrast, when it comes to Oxford's recent debate on governance, the distinctions between the different parties were clear. While affirming their respective commitments to Oxford as a collegiate university, the parties were (and, in the context of the debate, continue to be) divided by differing interpretations of four overlapping variables:

1. In view of Oxford's continuing international reputation, does it really need to change its model of governance? This view contains an almost implicit assumption of a positive link between institutional status and how Oxford is governed.
2. How severe are the pressures for change that have been exerted in recent years by a number of powerful higher education interests? Are these interests demanding change or is it more a question that Oxford needs to justify its almost unique model of governance?
3. Does Oxford need to modify its structure of governance (the institutional framework), its style of governance (the manner in which conducts its business) or both?
4. Should the focus be upon particular institutions and institutional relationships or is there a need for a general overhaul?

It is possible, if dangerous, to construct a polarised picture. On the one hand there is the 'if it is not broke don't fix it' camp, which argues more for procedural rather than structural change with a focus upon the weakness of particular institutions (e.g. while the sovereignty of Congregation is respected, its effectiveness is widely doubted). For those in this camp the onus is upon Oxford to explain itself to the world rather than bow to pressure. On the hand there is the 'stitch in time saves nine' camp, which argues for both procedural and structural changes and is enamoured of the set-piece overhauls associated with past commissions of enquiry. This camp is convinced that, regardless of the moderation or otherwise of the external messages, the pressure will not be removed until Oxford's exceptional character has been modified substantially – what is required is change not explanation.

However, as a former vice-chancellor reminds us, underlying the governance debates are key questions, including 'Who holds power in the institution and how is that monitored?' and, with respect to the then current proposal for change, he added '. . . it does offer the beginnings of a solution to this critical issue of the integration of the University and the Colleges in the interests of a strong collegiate university in a rapidly changing world' (Lucas, 2006, p. 6). The purpose of this chapter is to examine that power struggle by exploring the path along which the various interests have travelled in their endeavours to create a system of governance that will best serve the University of Oxford as it faces the future.

To this end, this chapter is organised around three different themes. First, it will present an overview of the values, structures and practices that are supposedly integral to Oxford's understanding of the collegial model of governance. Second, it will examine some of the power struggles associated with the reform movement that has unfolded from the Franks Report of the mid-1960s, through the North Report of the late-1990s and on to the very recent conflict generated by the vice-chancellorship of John Hood. Third, it will show how the University and colleges, shielded from the limelight of major initiatives, have been restructuring both their own affairs and their mutual relationship in order to create a different, and hopefully more effective,

system of governance. Finally, it will offer an analysis of the contemporary situation with particular reference to the concept of federalism as well as a short reflection on future developments.

The Meaning of Collegial Governance

Federalism

The federalist principle is central to the collegiate university. It is the base upon which its model of governance is constructed. Indeed, Rothblatt has argued that the collegiate model of the university is a particular representation of the federal principle with long antecedents (1997, pp. 233–238). However, while he may claim that the evolution of the federal principle is a key development in the history of the *modern* university, even a cursory reading of Oxbridge's history demonstrates a shifting balance of power within its collegiate model. How close is the relationship between collegiality and federalism and how significant are the long antecedents? For example, in the Oxford of the 1850s the Hebdomadal Board had the sole power of initiative in University legislation ('All new measures had to be drawn up by them before submission to Convocation'). And, even more significantly, it was composed of the vice-chancellor (the post rotated amongst the college heads), the twenty-three other Heads of Houses and the two Proctors (Asquith Commission, 1922b, p. 226). This is at best a very weak federal system of governance; the colleges colonised the University to such an extent that it had no discernible identity of its own.

Central to the federal model of governance are two key principles. Firstly, that there is a sharing of responsibility for key institutional functions in which different institutional layers within the model will be responsible for particular functions, while other functions constitute a shared responsibility. Secondly, while there may be a need for interaction between the institutional layers if the overall system is going to function effectively, they must also possess an independent power base. In other words, although the nineteenth century Hebdomadal Council may have been a university institution, it functioned, as clearly reflected in its composition, as a power base for the powerful college interests. The University was a colony of the colleges rather than a sovereign institution.

It is this second principle that has caused most difficulty for those who claim that a federal model of governance prevails at Oxford. However, it is impossible to deny that the authority of the University, which was initially dependent mainly upon its control of the examination process, so regulating the awarding of degrees (reinforced by its responsibilities for the Bodleian Library and the appointment of named professorial chairs), has expanded steadily embracing the appointment of most faculty, the organisation of a considerable portion of undergraduate teaching, the control of postgraduate education, providing resources for research and taking the lead in responding to the external pressure for accountability, which was required by the state. The colleges were scarcely in a position to provide a co-ordinated response to such demands.

Drawing a comparison with the most famous model of federal governance, the US political system, powerfully illustrates the point about the power relationship between the centre and the periphery. The US Senate, given that it is composed of two members from each of the fifty states, directly represents the interests of the states, but nonetheless it is part of the federal government. For the purposes of re-election the senators have to curry favour with the folks back home but whilst in Washington DC they are – for the most part – undertaking the nation's business rather than attending to the affairs of their state. Moreover, the basis of their authority is membership of the Senate, far removed from any institutional connections they may have retained in their home states. Finally, they have a 6-year term of office. This is very different from the structures of the collegiate universities: while membership of university bodies carries with it responsibility for conducting its affairs, nearly all the members have an alternative institutional base in the colleges, which are also intimately concerned with precisely the same issues. The business of the University is all too often also the business of the colleges. However, we will return to this question of how to label Oxford's model of governance – federal or confederal – when we examine the moves from the Franks Report onwards to instigate change.

Donnish Dominion

If federalism provides the best descriptive label of the distribution of institutional authority within the collegiate university, then the second key defining variable is who controls the levers of institutional power? And no better descriptive label can be applied than Halsey's concept of donnish dominion (Halsey, 1995). Both Oxford and Cambridge pride themselves on being democratic institutions in which sovereignty formally resides in their assembled membership – Congregation at Oxford and the Regent House at Cambridge. In a parallel fashion, within the individual colleges it is the fellows who constitute the sovereign body of the college. This may be an elitist form of democracy in the sense that not all members of the university/colleges can participate in the decision-making process (although the membership boundary – except for the rights of alumni – has been extended), but it also represents a model of direct rather than representative democracy.

The concept of donnish dominion points to a model of governance that places the resident academic faculty at the heart of the decision-making process. Institutional sovereignty resides with the dons both in college and in University. The collegial tradition is defined as much by what it purposely sets itself against as by what it embraces. Consequently, collegial governance looks suspiciously upon features common to many institutions of higher education: 'leadership' and 'management' (as opposed to 'governance' and 'administration'), and the intrusion of the outside (lay) world. These are forces that could undermine the cosy world of the gifted amateurs. Indeed, the very topography of the colleges often gives the impression that they were designed to keep the outside world at bay: stout gates, barred windows and spikes on walls. And, while in recent years British universities have

vociferously defended their rights as autonomous institutions, only Oxbridge can seriously claim to be self-governing in the sense that until recently lay representation on the Governing Bodies has been conspicuous by its absence and, as we will see, is still looked upon with deep suspicion. Although both college and university may call upon outside expertise, particularly so when making financial decisions, this is far removed from incorporating 'outsiders' in the machinery of government.

Merton College, in its evidence to the Franks Commission, although not referring specifically to the University's officials, expressed publicly what many Oxbridge tutors at that time probably felt about them: 'Education in general and university education *par excellence* are worlds in which the university administrator should be kept in his place' (University of Oxford, 1965, Part 13, p. 35). And, of course, what held true for the University would be equally applicable to the colleges. Whilst it is hard to overlook the arrogance that such a simple-minded assertion reveals, it is a consequence of a tradition that sees governance as the responsibility of those gifted amateurs, the dons. Naturally, the best way to avoid the intrusion of administrators was for the dons to undertake the tasks themselves. John Maynard Keynes of Kings College is probably the best-known bursar in Cambridge's history. If you should require full-time officials (and many colleges have been reluctant to go down this route) then it is important to ensure that they know their place. The officials are there to provide support for the dons, not to usurp their role. But it is unlikely that Merton College would proffer (at least in public) the same advice in today's world, even if one believes that 'un-elected administrative officers' have surreptitiously assumed control of the levers of power (Baty, 1999, January 22, p. 60). Today the demands upon institutions of higher education are such that, even if you fear the consequences, you know that competent administrative support is an integral part of survival (Gordon, 2010, pp. 71–75). Fears there may be, but they are likely to be expressed more obliquely and in private.

Whilst the collegial tradition is slowly, if reluctantly, coming to terms with the intrusion of outsiders and the incorporation of professional officers in the affairs of governance, it has always had to adjust to leaders. Thus colleges have deans, wardens, heads, masters or provosts and the Universities have vice-chancellors. Because there are many colleges, with circumstances varying so much over time and from place to place, and – perhaps most importantly – people bring differing qualities to the same posts, it is dangerous to make too many sweeping generalisations about leadership styles. Nonetheless, one assertion is frequently heard: it is the primary function of leadership within the collegial tradition to preserve consensus. Kenny of Balliol expressed it thus:

> If I were asked to put the duties of a Master in a nutshell I would say that it is to be a peacemaker: to hold the ring between senior and junior members, to persuade one Fellow that he has not been impardonably insulted by another, and to reconcile old members to the College of the present day.
>
> (Kenny, 1997, p. 108)

If this is indeed the primary function of collegial leadership, and several of our interviewees – including one head of college – made similar observations, the

questions then are who is best qualified to fulfil such a role and who would want to do it?

It is self-evident that the ride will be easier if someone is already attuned to the collegial culture and is aware of the limitations as well as the opportunities of the post. By definition either those who are insiders or have the ability to adjust to the collegial environment will find life more congenial. Anthony Smith, former President of Magdalen College, Oxford – after presenting his credentials as an *outsider* – has written, 'But I have found the collegiate method of governance to be an extremely efficient mechanism with which it is much easier to bring about change and development in any other I have known' (Smith, 1998, June 26, p. 15). Smith also argues that leadership, in the sense of promoting initiatives, as opposed to consensus-building, can be exercised: 'The head of a college is not a managing director but none the less, though in different ways, is perfectly able to take initiatives and press his or her own favoured policies'. And Harrison, in his portrait of Sir Kenneth Dover, saw him as an effective advocate of liberal causes (Harrison, 1994, December 23, p. 16). The obvious conclusion to draw is that those who are prepared to work with the grain of the tradition can use their position to bring about change. It is difficult to avoid the impression that this will involve a lot of talking, quiet persuasion and gentle arm-twisting; those who want change have first to construct a supportive consensus.

In his study of John Sparrow, long-term Warden of All Souls, John Lowe provides an interesting perspective on why the fellows would have been attracted to him: 'It was interesting that he [Sparrow] should cite F.W.Pember as his kind of Warden. During those 19 years when Pember was head of the college his main achievement was to maintain the status quo. Those who knew John well suspected that he nursed a similar ambition and feared that Isaiah Berlin [at one time a prospective candidate for the post] might, in one way or another, disrupt their favourite club' (Lowe, 1998, pp. 147–148). Given the size of its endowment income, and the college's ability to resist sharing its largesse with even postgraduate students, let alone undergraduates, perhaps All Souls could, and still can, continue to afford to take such an Olympian view of the world. No other Oxford college is in such a privileged position and, as much as they may regret it, they have to embrace change.

Finally, two comparatively recent *causes célèbres*, one at Oxford and the other at Cambridge, have given rise to some interesting, if wild, speculation on the appointment of college masters (and, of course, there is classic literary tale of C.P. Snow's *The Masters*). In 1993, after less than a year as President of Wolfson College, Cambridge, John Tusa – former head of the BBC's World Service – resigned. And more recently, in an equal blaze of publicity, Stephen Tumim – onetime judge and then Chief Inspector of the nation's prisons – was ousted as Principal of Oxford's St. Edmund Hall. There were frequent references to alleged 'culture clashes' between men used to conducting their affairs in a manner that did not gel easily with the collegial tradition of governance. Moreover, tension may have been exacerbated by their failure to appreciate the demands of the role, to recognise that it can require a close attention to administrative detail and is not all-gracious living. There is little point in

adding to the speculation surrounding these two cases, although it is astounding that storms in a teacup at two comparatively minor colleges should generate such media attention. Furthermore, such events – although rare – are bound to occur from time to time.

The Style of Governance

Before the reforms instigated by the Victorian commissions it was the responsibility of both present and *past* members to preserve its traditions, in particular the obligation to uphold university and college statutes. Present and past were perceived as guardians of a heritage that should be preserved for the future. The commissions greatly diminished the role of past members, reserving for them a few symbolic tasks. And certainly after the proposals of Asquith's Commission were adopted, the current members found it easier to redefine their statutory obligations. They were in control of their own house and donnish dominion bloomed. In effect the current members could be seen as trustees of the welfare of the colleges and the two Universities; they now had the overwhelming responsibility for ensuring that the legacy was passed on in good order.

Although it can be fairly argued that democratic governance is intrinsic to the idea of collegiality, the question then arises as to how the model should actually function. Many of our interviewees stressed that Oxford was a place where formal status counted for little, that the voice of professors carried no more weight in ordering the affairs of the University and the colleges than their most junior academic colleagues. Be that as it may, collegiality certainly implies the sharing of responsibilities, of working towards agreed ends within a consensual framework. And one wonders how much room for manoeuvre that would leave, the eccentric and the maverick or even those who are simply indifferent to the allure of Oxbridge's charms. While the process of decision-making may be communal and egalitarian in character, is there an expectation that once a consensus has been arrived at it should be loyally sustained?

The conflict that mavericks can induce within collegial systems was vividly illustrated by the increasingly tense relationship between Kenneth Dover, the President of Corpus Christi, Oxford, and Trevor Aston, a fellow and librarian of the college. Of course the tension was heightened by Aston's tragic suicide; an outcome made more shocking by Dover's admission that he was prepared to contemplate murder to rid the college of someone he perceived to be a destructive force (Cunningham, 1994 9 December, p. 15; Dover, 1994). But as another fellow of Corpus, Brian Harrison, reminds us, the apparent conflict between two individuals in fact involved the much broader issue of good collegial governance:

> It stemmed from the reluctant struggle by the fellows of Corpus to carry out their statutory duty: to run the college's affairs in a proper manner when challenged by a talented individual .... At no stage in the "Aston affair" was Dover acting as an individual: he was acting as trustee for the welfare of the College.
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> (Harrison, 1994, 23 December, p. 16)

While we would argue that perhaps Harrison has drawn too sharp a distinction between Dover the individual and Dover the trustee (and, of course, the President), his point is well made.

Hence, precisely what therefore makes for good collegial governance? What circumstances best encourage a broad constructive input from the Governing Body as a whole whilst constraining the worst excesses of the mavericks? Firstly, and surely most significantly, there has to be a strong commitment from the fellowship that the game is worth playing. Without a widely shared belief that time and energy spent on collegial governance is time and energy well spent, the appeal of collegiality has a hollow ring. This means a willingness to attend meetings of the Governing Body and to share in the responsibilities of collegial governance: to become a member of the various committees and be prepared to fill a college office. There is widespread agreement that, whatever his faults, Trevor Aston was a great college librarian. Without fellows keen to assume responsibility for the silver, the paintings, the rare books, the manuscripts, the wine cellar and even the gardens then the tangible fabric of a college will fall into disrepair.

The collegial decision-making process is designed to produce governance by consensus through the participation of the collective membership of the institution. It is almost an implicit assumption that the rational exchange of views will produce an agreed consensus around which the membership at large can unite. As a consequence this means governance by consultation, discussion and committee. Moreover, while accumulated expertise is not to be scorned, collegial governance is enhanced if there is a rotation of committee membership and of office holders. If rotation occurs then the idea of sharing responsibilities is deepened and, moreover, it enables a wider range of fellows to understand the multitude of problems that inevitably are a part of institutional governance.

Intrinsic, therefore, to collegial governance is the idea of shared responsibility with all members supposedly having an equal right to participate in the decision-making process. Inevitably, this is a slow process of deliberation that does not value swift policy output as an end in itself. Not surprisingly, the reality (with proactive college heads/vice-chancellors, and a professional administrative cadre) may be very different, which conjures up the possibility of a widening gap between the idea of collegial governance and its actual mode of operation.

It is important, however, not to see the threats to collegial governance as simply the manifestation of external pressure for its key values and practices have always stimulated a reasoned critique. First, although the policy-making process may encapsulate all institutional members, there is the question of who is to count as a member. Rather than representing a model of direct democracy based on the general assembly, a narrow definition of membership could result in an elitist model. Second, this is not so much a slow and rational process of decision-making but rather one that is cumbersome, proceeding at the whim of its most recalcitrant members who may have little more than vested personal interests to defend. Third, although there may be a collective responsibility for policy-making and administration, it shields those who have clearly demonstrated their individual incompetence. It is not that Trevor Aston was incompetent (indeed far from it) but it does appear he

was allowed to pursue for quite some time a path that was judged not to be in the best long-term interests of his college as defined by the majority of its fellows, and certainly by its President. Fourth, while rotating responsibility for performing institutional duties may help to build a sense of collective identity, there is always the danger that a post requiring professional expertise is filled by an incompetent amateur. We tend to hear of the great stars (Keynes as Bursar of King's College, Cambridge) but far less of the mediocre office holders.

Contemporary Reform: Franks, North and Hood

The pressure to change Oxford's model of governance has been especially intense in the past 50 years, perhaps matching the process of reform set in train during the latter half of the nineteenth century, which culminated in the recommendations of the Asquith Commission of Enquiry that reported in 1922. We have dealt in-depth with these pressures elsewhere (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 41–52) as well as touched upon them in this book. The wider world demands more answers to be given more swiftly. It is as if we are intolerant of consensus-building, of a leadership programmed to prod the fellows to do what they know they should have done long ago and of changes that seem to occur, if not at the pace of the tortoise, then most certainly not at the pace of the hare. On the one hand, there is political pressure with increasing state demand that the universities demonstrate their accountability in return for its financial largesse; on the other hand, there are changes in the character of higher education – its expansion, its diversification and the shifting model of an academic career in which research output is increasingly valued over teaching input.

Oxford has reacted to these pressures with three major initiatives, which, although two of them had somewhat broader remits, were directed at analysing, as well as making recommendations for, the reform of the University's system of governance. While the colleges were not the primary focus of attention, within the context of the collegiate university it is virtually impossible to consider university governance without taking into account the role of the colleges. Interestingly, although it is difficult to evaluate its precise significance, each of Oxford's three initiatives can be linked to national reports designed to impact upon the system of higher education. Thus:

The Committee on Higher Education (Robbins Report, 1963)	*Commission of inquiry* (Franks Report, 1966)
National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing Report, 1997)	*Commission of inquiry* (North Report, 1997a)
Lambert review of business-university collaboration (HM Treasury, 2003)	*White paper on university governance* (University of Oxford, 2006)

The *Lambert Review's* discussion of the governance of Oxford and Cambridge is part of a broader package of institutional pressures reinforced by earlier parallel recommendations from the Dearing Inquiry as well as the Committee of University

Chairmen (1995) and then subsequently by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (2007, 18 July). And in response to the latter communication, Oxford's Audit and Scrutiny Committee drew up its *Governance Report to Council* (University of Oxford, 2009, January), which is still under consideration. The struggle, therefore, is ongoing with the end not yet in sight.

The Franks Report

Not surprisingly, the Report confirmed its commitment to the retention of Oxford as a collegiate university: '... Oxford should develop and improve its collegiate structure: the colleges should retain their legal position as constituent partners with powers of self-government within the University' (University of Oxford, 1966, para 85). The Commission proceeded to make a number of recommendations, which in its judgement would aid that development and improvement. The Oxford model of governance was to be reformed at both the university and intercollegiate levels, coupled with a significant financial recommendation that would impact upon the colleges (for the most succinct, if somewhat jaundiced, overview of the fate of the recommendations, see Halsey, 1995, pp. 149–174).

The residue powers of Convocation (current and past members of the university) were abolished 'with the exception of its power to elect the Chancellor and the Professor of Poetry' (Halsey, 1995, p. 162). Henceforth Congregation would elect the vice-chancellor on the recommendation of a nominating committee. The vice-chancellor's term of office was increased from 2 to 4 years and she/he no longer had to be a college head. The Hebdomadal Council (now simply known as Council) became the chief administrative body of the university (under the day-to-day supervision of the registrar) and, although working within the boundaries of Congregation's sovereignty, was the University's centre of executive authority. However, Congregation rejected the Commission's proposal to streamline the administrative effectiveness of the General Board (the ultimate source of academic authority) by reorganising the University's academic activities into five faculties that would report to it. Moreover, Congregation did not act to confine its own sovereignty by agreeing to measures that would impinge upon its ability to constrain the central university authorities.

It is perhaps at the level of intercollegiate governance that the recommendations of the Frank's Report received their most serious setback. The Report had recommended the creation of a Council of the Colleges, with a membership embracing all the colleges and the vice-chancellor 'as chairman ex officio' (University of Oxford, 1966, recommendation 143). The Council of the Colleges would serve two essential functions: it would give the colleges a collective voice with decisions arrived at through a majority voting mechanism and it would, if not integrate, then closely coordinate the policy positions of the University (the Hebdomadal Council) and the colleges (the Council of the Colleges). The Franks Report states: 'We have said that the Council of the Colleges should be set up by statute, and that, like all university bodies it should come under the general control of the Hebdomadal Council'

(University of Oxford, 1996, para 617). In the event of a significant policy clash between the two bodies, the issue would be resolved by a vote in Congregation.

This was clearly a step too far for many of the colleges, especially those with greater wealth and prestige. Not only could their interests (more especially their endowment income!) be threatened by the poorer, less-prestigious colleges but also this would be done by a body that, in spite of the possibility of an appeal under certain circumstances to Congregation, was potentially under the control of the University. In spite of the outrage expressed in certain quarters, it was easy to predict that in the context of the 1960s this was a step too far for powerful collegial interests. The consequence was that the proposed Council of Colleges became a Conference of Colleges in which issues were discussed, positions clarified and lines drawn. In effect, it was an upmarket talking-shop. It is probably this outcome more than any others that led to Halsey's beautifully expressed judgement of the Franks Commission:

> In simple constitutional terms, Congregation continued to rule. The Hebdomadal Council or the General Board might propose, but the assembled dons disposed. Congregation could, and occasionally did, say 'non placet' to the wishes of those it had elected to the formal heights of university authority. The ancient syndicalist arrangement survived and the central university bodies could still justly, if satirically, be described as the executive committee of the collegiate class. Franks left the public life of Oxford as he found it, quietly led and controlled by the private life of its colleges.
>
> (Halsey, 1995, p. 166)

But over time, as we will show, even 'talking shops' have the potential to change and demonstrate their worth.

The Franks Commission had no remit to delve into the governance of the colleges but it did make an important recommendation (which was acted upon) concerning the financial links between the colleges and the University. The richer colleges had been taxed annually since the 1922 Asquith Commission to provide resources for the University. In view of the fact that, thanks mainly to public funding, the University post-1945 had become steadily wealthier, it was proposed to redirect that tax revenue to the poorer colleges. However, it was argued in certain quarters that endowment income should be pooled and then redistributed to the colleges according to their needs, and hence the taxation plan may appear as a poor substitute, one that does not impact unduly upon the richer colleges while enabling them to proclaim their largesse. But there is a broader point to be made for the issue illustrates the tension within the collegiate model. On the one hand, it seems logical to pose the idea that collegiality will flourish best if the colleges prosper collectively. On the other hand, central to the collegial tradition is the idea of institutional autonomy and, moreover, there is also the possibility that to weaken strong colleges does more to enhance the authority of the University than to strengthen the collective identity of the colleges with the balance of power then shifting to the centre and away from the periphery.

The North Report

Although the Franks Inquiry can be viewed as Oxford's response to criticisms of the University to be found in the Robbins Report, the climate of the times was broadly

supportive of higher education. Within this context, although there was suspicion of the character of the two collegiate universities, the pressure was directed at the need to explain, to reform, to justify their status and to demonstrate their ability to sustain it.

The North Commission of Inquiry took place in a far more hostile and demanding environment. The system of higher education was under pressure to demonstrate its effectiveness with respect to delivering social and economic goals. There was a developing apparatus of accountability that embraced all higher education institutions in a centrally regulated regime of supervision and control (Tapper, 2007, pp. 225–238). Moreover, with respect to Oxbridge it was no longer a question of requiring the Universities to explain themselves, but rather to demonstrate why they should be governed differently. Both prior and subsequent to the North Report powerful interests in higher education (notably the Dearing Report and the CUC) were actually constructing models of what they considered to be good governance and asking why Oxford was different. On issues such as the size of their central executive bodies (the councils), the absence of lay representation on those bodies and the fact that sovereignty was embedded in an assembly of resident members (Congregation at Oxford, the Regent House at Cambridge) both Oxford and Cambridge were very exceptional universities. Although the Commission may not express the issues in such dramatic terms (University of Oxford, 1997a, pp. 9–21), nonetheless with respect to how Oxford should be governed this is the broad framework within which it had to conduct its business.

The most succinct overview of the changes to Oxford's model of governance that flowed out of the North Report is to be found in the University's Audit and Scrutiny Committee's 'Governance Report to Council' (University of Oxford, 2009, January). The Report notes, 'Further important changes to the University's internal structures were approved by the University in 1999, the legislation coming into force in October 2000'. These changes followed on from the North Commission of Inquiry with its recommendations reviewed and put into effect after 'further consideration by a Joint Working Party on governance chaired by the then vice chancellor, Dr. Colin Lucas . . .' with a new set of statutes enacted in 2002 (University of Oxford, 2009, p. 4).

The main outcomes were as follows:

- Congregation (now with over 4,000 members) was reaffirmed as the University's sovereign body.
- Council, with between 25 and 28 members, subject to the powers of Congregation, was reaffirmed as the University's executive body.
- The General Board of the Faculties was abolished (thus ending a structure akin to a bicameral model of governance) with responsibility for the academic affairs of the University falling under the auspices of four (originally five) academic divisions each headed by a chair with a seat on Council ('super boards' standing between Council and the rank-and-file academics; Horder, 1999, pp. 7–9).
- The vice-chancellor's term of office was extended to 5 years with a further possible extension of 2 years, and she/he was confirmed as the University's principal administrative and academic officer.

There was also a recommendation in the North Commission's Report that the Conference of Colleges should consider 'the possibility of developing further the responsibilities of its Standing Committee' (University of Oxford, 1997a, recommendation 28, xv). While this is a recommendation of the Commission, developments on this front have occurred within a wider context and will form the core of the next section of this chapter. The University's structure of governance following the North Report was – and still is – as outlined in Fig. 7.1 (see below).

The North Report built on, rather than negated, the recommendations of the Franks Report. It created a more integrated decision-making and administrative structure through the abolition of the General Board of the Faculties and made it more likely that an 'outsider' could become vice-chancellor of the university. There was also recognition of the burdens associated with the top administrative posts, which subsequently became in several cases full-time jobs (thus making it somewhat more difficult to sustain the collegial principle of the rotation of officers). Perhaps a more significant development was the recommendation to include two lay members on Council, which after pressure from HEFCE was increased to four.

The question of lay representation has been a contentious issue at least as far back as the Asquith Commission, which firmly rejected it (1922, p. 73). Both the Franks Report (University of Oxford, 1966) and the Wass Report (University of Cambridge, 1989, May 19) had also argued against it. Furthermore, the Wass Report couched its rejection in terms that powerfully restated the established ideology: 'We believe that it is important to preserve the traditional character of Cambridge as a self-governing community of scholars; self-government demands self-discipline, and this is an ideal we do not wish to undermine' (University of Cambridge, 1989, p. 626). But with the North Commission, very conscious of Oxford's exceptionalism, we see perhaps the beginnings of a small crack in the façade, and, as John Hood's subsequent vice-chancellorship unfolds, this very issue generates a significant split within the University

Hood's 'Leap in the Dark'

In the sense that John Hood was not a career academic, he is, although he had studied at Oxford, the first vice-chancellor who could be labelled an 'outsider.' How responsible this was for his failure to secure his package of reforms is a matter of conjecture. Would an 'insider' have sensed from the start that the proposals were likely to be a step too far for the bulk of Congregation's members? Or is it more a question of adopting inappropriate tactics and an 'insider' would have been more attuned to the adroit manipulation of the levers of power? Regardless, the reform package failed and Oxford's structure of governance remains substantially as it was following the implementation of the recommendations of the North Report. And it is another matter for conjecture as to what impact, if any, this failure had upon Hood's decision not to seek the 2-year extension of his vice-chancellorship that was permitted, thanks to the constitutional reforms recommended by the North Report.

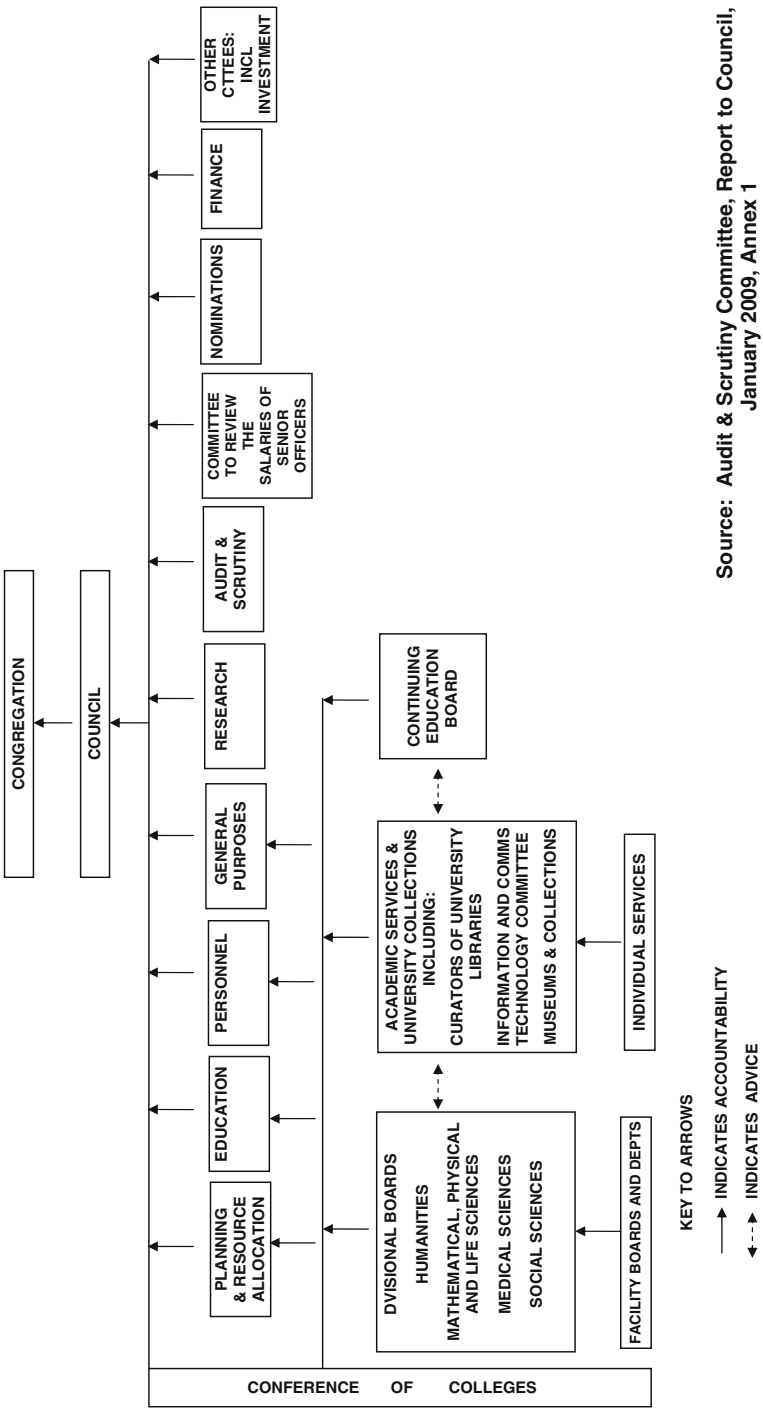

Fig. 7.1 Outline of the university's current governance structure

The recommendations of both the Franks' and North's Reports were arrived at through a critically different route from the reforms proposed by vice-chancellor Hood. It is one thing to propose reform on the basis of a wide-ranging, in-depth inquiry, with – as was true of Franks Commission – voluminous evidence taken 'in public', but quite another to act on an initiative emerging essentially from the core of the University's administrative structure. This is not to pass judgement on the strength of the respective proposals or to deny that the Hood package, like the recommendations of the two Commissions, was widely debated in the University. Moreover, Hood's initiative generated the usual, perhaps even greater, media attention with *Business Week* portraying the vice-chancellor as the man who was intent on 'Shaking up Oxford' (Reed, 2005, 5 December, pp. 20–24). In fact as much of a problem was the convoluted passage of the reform package through the legislative process, suggesting both a lack of a clear vision and a confused tactical strategy.

As with the two Commissions, it is dangerous to highlight particular aspects of the package, but the focus of the reforms was entirely upon the governance of the University, although the need for this was justified contextually if contentiously. The key issues centred on the composition and structure of Council (note the heading of the 9th November 2006 issue of the *Gazette* – 'Congregation 14 November: Voting on New Statute V1 [Concerning Council]).' The size of Council was to be reduced to fifteen with seven internal and seven lay members and a lay Chair, although this was subsequently revised to seven internal and seven lay members with the Chancellor (Chris Patten) taking the Chair for 5 years, with thereafter the post held by a lay member (University of Oxford, 2006, 22 November Statute V1.8).

Something approximating a bicameral structure would be re-introduced with the creation of an Academic Board (thus paralleling the structure prior to the post-North reforms and indeed that of many other British universities). Moreover, at an earlier point in the process it had been proposed that the Conference of Colleges should be subject to the jurisdiction of Council (effectively becoming a committee of Council) but this does not appear in the Amended Statute V1 (Concerning Council) that was eventually put to Congregation (Ryan, 2005a, pp. 16–18; Vines, 2005, pp. 11–16).

But all was to no avail for the Hood proposals were defeated decisively, first by a vote in Congregation (held in the Sheldonian Theatre, and by all accounts a very emotional occasion – Evans, 2010, p. 76) and then by a postal vote of its membership. Alan Ryan has written, 'Oxford is a workers' cooperative and a federal institution; rational government follows the grain of the institution. Only someone who sees herself or himself as the servant and not the master of their colleagues should try to run a College or the University' (Ryan, 2005b, 12). There was a strong feeling within Oxford that the Hood proposals would ensure the demise of the workers' cooperative (ushering in the managerial revolution) and undermine the federal model of governance (concentrating undue authority in the hands of Council – and a Council with a majority of lay persons). Those representing grassroots collegial interests remained sufficiently powerful to ensure that this would not pass.

Given that the Hood proposals constituted a package Congregation's rejection meant that the status quo was retained. The great irony remains that, although many parties still accept the need for reform, they are bitterly divided as to what course

it should take. In the 2 November 2006 issue of the *Gazette* are to be found three amendments for the then forthcoming (14 November 2006) debate in Congregation on the proposed changes in governance. Somewhat dramatically these are listed under the title 'In Defence of Democratic Governance' and firmly state the case for the retention of authority in the hands of the academics (with a majority of members of the Council and its proposed Academic Board elected by Congregation and the colleges) while Council would have essentially *advisory* responsibilities. Even a cursory perusal of the *Oxford Magazine* (the most important university forum for the regular airing of grassroots academic opinion) would demonstrate both the divisiveness of the Hood proposals along with the presence of a cadre of regular contributors who were bitterly opposed to them. However, the ring for reform sounds rather hollow if the constituent interests are incapable of constructing tangible compromises. Ironically, an integral part of the collegial tradition is the claim that it enables the building of consensus through compromises that flow out of the exchange of ideas; something that Oxford as a collegiate university occasionally seems incapable of achieving. And, while Hood may have lost the battle, the University appears to have entered a quiet phase of reform from the bottom upwards.

Contemporary Reform: Quietly Flows the Isis

It is inevitable that the major initiatives to reform the governance of Oxford would receive considerable publicity. It is dangerous, however, to plot the course of change solely on the outcome of these set-piece landmarks. There are a number of critical developments – within colleges, at the intercollegiate level and in the interaction of the University with the collegiate bodies – that have been quietly reshaping over time the University's federal model of governance. Moreover, there have been steady developments in the responsibilities of the respective parties, which, although they may not formally change the federal model, inevitably impact upon the distribution of institutional authority: the channelling of what once was the college fee income of UK and EU undergraduates through the University, the University's responsibility for managing relatively new external pressures from (for example) the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs) and the balance of financial support for those faculty with joint appointments (the Common University Fund – CUF – academics) – with in the long run more of the costs being met by the University (although recently the college input has expanded). It is these trends and oscillations that underwrite the shifting balance of power within the collegiate university.

The Conference of Colleges is a classic example of how a body, once widely seen to be a mere talking-shop, has been able to augment its authority with new structures and procedures, thanks to the persistent pressure that the colleges on key issues need to speak with a united voice. Moreover, as this has been evolving so the relationship with the University's institutions has assumed a new shape, which has brought closer the day when it can be said that Oxford speaks with one voice.

The Conference of Colleges, with its own secretariat (located – significantly – in the University offices in Wellington Square), functions in essence through a number of committees, each with a specialised area of responsibility (Conference of Colleges, 2009a):

Admissions Committee;
Domestic Bursars' Committee;
Estate Bursars' Committee;
Graduate Committee;
Senior Tutors' Committee;
Legal Panel;
Monitoring and Moderation Board;
Colleges' ICT Committee; and
Committee of College Librarians.

Most committees have a comparatively small (around 10 members) executive committee, and then there is a Steering Committee, which is composed of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Conference, the Chairs of some of the committees and representatives drawn from the colleges (2 heads of houses and 3 fellows).

Without undertaking research it is difficult to say whether this is a committee structure that functions efficiently, but its overall shape suggests that the purpose is to expedite business rather than simply to engage in debate. For example, the Conference's Annual Review 2008–2009 claims that the focus of the Steering Committee is to facilitate 'the work of Conference' and to act 'as a forum for quick discussion and decision-making' (Conference of Colleges, 2009b, p. 5). Moreover, many of the committees work closely with the University's institutions, e.g. the Senior Tutors' and Admissions Committee liasing with Council's Education Committee. The 2009–2010 Handbook of the Conference of Colleges notes that its Admissions Committee 'meets termly and is supported by an Executive Committee, drawn from colleges and the University' (Conference of Colleges, 2009b, p. 7). The North Commission had been disparaging about the existing Joint Undergraduate Admissions Committee (JUAC): 'its main responsibilities are for managing the details of the annual admissions process' (University of Oxford, 1997a, p. 36). And what the Commission recommended was the creation of a '. . . Joint Standing Committee on Access with membership drawn from both university bodies and the colleges, and chaired by the Vice-Chancellor in the first instance'. And, broadly speaking, this is what has evolved.

A perusal of the minutes of the Conference of Colleges (including minutes of the individual committees) reveals, not surprisingly, that of late the colleges have been much concerned with financial issues – in particular the implications for them of the university's Joint Resources and Allocation Mechanism (JRAM) and proposals to revise the College Contributions Scheme. However, the second most important issue has been that of 'joint planning and decision making' and in May 2007 the Conference issued the 'Report of the Working Group on Joint Planning and

Decision-Making,' which included recommendations for the representation of university personnel at college committee meetings with, not surprisingly, reciprocal arrangements (Conference of Colleges, 2007, 9 May, Sect. 8).

The main reason why the Conference of Colleges was initially called a talking-shop was its failure to adopt a system of majority voting to underline its decision-making process. In view of the fact that the colleges are in law independent corporate bodies, it could scarcely be expected that they would commit themselves to procedures in which a simple majority of one college would be sufficient to ratify a decision that was binding on all the colleges. The Conference set up a 'Working Group on Joint Planning and Decision-Making' that reported in May 2007 and, following its recommendations, Standing Orders were established, which created voting procedures for the Conference and its committees. For the Conference these read:

> Where Conference is called upon or wishes to make a collective decision on behalf of Colleges as a whole, the following procedures shall apply.
>
> (a) Where a matter is to be decided by vote at Conference, the Steering Committee will alert Colleges that a particular matter is going to fall for consideration by a vote at the next but one meeting of the Conference
>
> . . .
>
> (d) For a resolution to be carried, a majority vote of at least three-quarters of those attending and voting will be required [abstainers are excluded from the calculation].
>
> (Conference of Colleges, 2007, Section 11: 5.5)

The in-built caution of these mechanisms scarcely suggest that the lemmings are about to leap over the cliff top, but – within the context of the broader changes – there is a clear shift towards procedures that enable the colleges to construct unified policy positions and pursue concerted administrative action; moreover, some of these decisions and action are taken in conjunction with the University. Undoubtedly, Oxford as an intercollegiate university has developed substantially in the past decade.

It would be logical to suppose that the purest form of collegial governance would be found in the colleges in view of the fact that the fellows have an obligation to act as trustees for the college's welfare, the historical strength of the collegial commitment to self-governance and the fact that the colleges remain relatively small, self-contained institutions and thus should be easier to govern collegially. Therefore, in the smaller, more intimate, context of the colleges it is to be expected that meetings of the Governing Bodies would continue to be well attended, and all our interviewees confirmed this – some of them relaying heroic struggles to ensure that they returned in time for a particularly important meeting. But there does not appear to be the same willingness to sit on college committees or to take up college posts. It is not unknown to find tutors taking responsibility for more than one task, e.g. with the college head fulfilling - as often in the past - the role of admissions tutor.

Most contemporary fellows will feel the pull of their wider social obligations, especially if they have partners and a young family with a working wife or husband to accommodate. And all will feel the pressure to demonstrate their research credentials. Several interviewees suggested that the younger scientists were especially

vulnerable in the present climate. They worked within departmental cultures that invariably emphasised the critical importance of research in the development of an academic career. Moreover, their departments and research teams provided a powerful *intellectual collegiality* to counteract the pull of the colleges. For the scientist collegiality may be better demonstrated by remaining in the laboratory tending to the ongoing research project rather than rushing back to college to attend a meeting that could prove tedious. Of course, for all British academics the research assessment exercises (RAEs) have pushed the balance between research and teaching in favour of the former. The fellows may be augmenting the volume of knowledge (more arguably also enhancing its quality) while the college fabric moulders. Have they got their priorities right?

But we already know the future model of collegial governance for it is taking root, with Cambridge leading the way. The colleges with the larger fellowships have introduced a very significant structural change by creating elected executive committees ('The College Council') that meet regularly and conduct most of the routine college business. Kenny has claimed that Balliol's Executive Committee, composed of elected and ex officio members and chaired – perhaps surprisingly – by the Vice-Master rather than the Master, is the real centre of policy-making within the College. And, although the 'Executive Committee was subject to Governing Body, and its decisions could be recalled and overturned', in reality 'much of the business left for the Governing Body was more or less ceremonial' (Kenny, 1997, p. 68). There must be more than one deceased Balliol fellow turning over in his grave.

Several of our interviewees made the point that fellows could adjust their relationship to the collegial tradition pragmatically. On occasions they had to distance themselves because of competing demands, whereas at other times they could be more fully involved. One suspects that this is a widespread mode of accommodation with 'the sleeping fellows' and 'the college careerists' as minorities at either end of the continuum. Thus, once one has a secure post it may encourage one to feel more positive about undertaking responsibilities for the college. Again, one can imagine that promotion would stimulate in many individuals a more relaxed view of the future, perhaps inducing the idea that henceforth it is important to pursue a more rounded career. Then, of course, there are those who are simply worn out by teaching and research, desperately looking for other avenues to demonstrate their talents.

It is also important not to lose sight of the fact that a college fellowship still carries with it an enormous amount of prestige. Furthermore, there is the little matter of the financial benefits that can accrue. Some may welcome the additional income that goes with holding important college posts, and few are likely to scorn the perks (entertainment allowance, research allowance, book budget and – more critically – housing allowance, assistance with mortgages and joint equity house-purchase arrangements) that accompany many fellowships. This is an impressive range of benefits and there are other rewards in life besides the joys of research and the accolade of those few who are familiar with your often seemingly esoteric, even trivial, research advances. While the demands of the contemporary world may be reformulating the collegial tradition almost beyond recognition, the allure of the colleges – albeit driven by pragmatic considerations – remains powerful.

Federalism and Donnish Dominion Revisited

In the late 1990s the then vice chancellor Colin Lucas described Oxford's collegiate system as a model of governance as 'more like that of the United States, with the University as federal government, colleges as independent states, and dons having two entirely compatible, though distinct, allegiances to a "local" institution, and also to a department or faculty' (Lucas, 1998, June 26, p. 15). One of our interviewees, at very much the same point in time, likened the then current structure of Oxford's governance to that of the United States in about the year 1840! The Franks Report, however, referred to Oxford as both a federal system and a federal union. While writing some 20 year later, Paul Flather credited the Report itself with creating the federal model: 'But the structure did move after Franks from a "confederal" to a "federal" one' (Flather, 1986, 5 December, p. 11). However, Halsey – reflecting the line he took some time back, begs to differ: 'The university as a whole has evolved into a unique confederation of colleges with a democratic syndicalist structure ensuring donnish dominion though the Governing Bodies of the colleges and also through Congregation, the town meeting of the academics, to which Hebdomadal Council and General Board were accountable' (Halsey, 2008, 7 June). Besides raising the question of whether they are still accountable, the equally obvious further question is what constitutes a federal system of governance?

We have implied that the central flaw in the federal analogy was the weakness of the centre (that is the University) because historically it has been dominated by those with strong alternative institutional allegiances whose interests invariably have prevailed in the counsels of the University. The University was a colony of the colleges and possessed little by way of an independent power base. Regardless of how federalism is interpreted, we are certainly looking at a different model of governance from that observed by the 1850 commissioners. They saw colleges but little of the University while the contemporary fear is that we can see an ever-expanding role for the University. Will it soon be all University with the colleges offering us little more than a glorious architectural legacy and upmarket halls of residence?

The expanding authority of the university in relation to its colleges, and the reasons for the tilting of the balance of power, are easy to document. What is more interesting to analyse are the tangible structural changes that make it possible to claim that Oxford has a federal model of governance in which the centre, with its own power base, shares responsibility with legally autonomous colleges for the welfare of the university. The most significant developments have been the following:

1. The extension of the length of service of the key office holders and the recognition that these are full-time salaried posts, thus distancing them from their prior institutional base. Indeed, with the prospect of a lengthy tenure, this may well be their final full-time university post before they retire.
2. The intrusion of 'outsiders/laypersons' into the committee structures, which is likely to mean that the committees function with a broader input of values. It is fascinating to note that currently both Oxford and Cambridge have

vice-chancellors who have pursued most of their careers in the United States. On the one hand they are clearly 'insiders' in the sense that they are senior professors with distinguished academic careers linked to elite universities in both the United States and Britain. But neither has been enveloped in Oxbridge, and the culture of the US Ivy League Universities is quite distinctive from the Oxbridge experience.

3. The provision of an effective secretariat is crucial and over time the central university (as well as the intercollegiate) bodies have augmented their support base and made it more professional. Institutional power is dependent upon the presence of a bureaucracy if it is to sustain its authority over time.
4. The increasing tendency for central policy-making and administrative bodies is either to downsize and/or work through a network of small and specialised committees. The failed Hood reforms pointed to a Council of 15 members, and the Conference of Colleges has established executive committees – composed of some 10 members – to oversee most of its specific obligations. The move is towards the delegation of responsibilities to issue-oriented committees with overall co-ordination and decision-making placed in a core committee located at the centre. This is not to say that this leads to either harmonious or effective governance (many would say the opposite), but it does make for a more powerful centre. Within the federal model there is always the question of how to construct a dynamic and fruitful relationship between the centre and periphery.

Two parallel structures of governance have been emerging in Oxford, one concerned mainly with the affairs of the University and the other with the affairs of the colleges. The university model (with the vice-chancellor and Council at its fulcrum) is now essentially federal in character. The college model (with the Chairman of Conference and Steering Committee at its heart) is essentially a confederal structure with its Steering Committee providing advice, strategic direction as well as consideration of and reflection on the key issues. Moreover, it is expected to liaise closely with the senior management of the University and, where appropriate, 'propose the setting up of joint University/College ad hoc Working Groups' (Conference of Colleges, 2007, Section 111: 4.1). But as significant as their individual characters is the interaction of the two models with a measure of shared committee membership and exchange of reports.

Historically the ultimate testament to Oxford's democratic tradition is that sovereignty resides in 'the assembly of the dons', whether that should be the University's Congregation or the meetings of the college fellows. This is a tradition of direct democracy, which except in a formal sense (these are the sovereign bodies) is simply inoperable in the contemporary world – certainly in the University, although the smaller scale of the colleges enables them to retain a vestige of the heritage. The issue is whether these bodies retain sufficient authority to exercise a meaningful supervisory role. Given the smaller scale of the colleges, the fellows – or at least those who wish to be involved – can act as effective guardians and the model appears to function effectively. With respect to Congregation, with its membership of over four thousand, it is quite a different matter. Except for the occasional *cause*

célèbre, amongst which one would undoubtedly include the recent attempt to reform university governance, its input into the decision-making process is moribund. Of course, it has the potential to act, which may be a constraint upon the University's executive bodies, but it can scarcely be interpreted as a continuously constructive input into the policy-making process.

It is interesting to note that the lobby 'In Defence of Democratic Governance' was focussed upon ensuring Congregation's dominant representation in the University's Governing Bodies rather than on how to make Congregation a more effective supervisory body (or to exercise its sovereignty constructively). This is surely a more critical issue to address than the question of how many lay representatives should sit on Council? Of course, to raise the question is to accept the possibility that Congregation is redundant, and henceforth Oxford's democratic heritage should be dependent on a constitution drawn up to protect certain basic rights coupled with mechanisms to ensure that the key decision-making bodies are broadly representative of the University's constituent interests.

We have examined how within the collegial tradition of governance, officialdom was kept at bay by the idea that the dons were perfectly capable of becoming effective administrators. Moreover, overlapping committee membership and the speedy rotation of posts amongst the dons would ensure good governance. But what is to be done if the dons no longer wish either to become college officers or to hold university posts? Currently, even comparatively small colleges cannot be governed without at least a cadre of permanent administrative officers. And the subtle development, which has been steadily embraced by both the University and colleges, is to incorporate them within the collegial tradition rather than to continue with the absurd insistence that they can never belong. This strengthens the tradition by providing it with another support base and at the same time it calms the fears of dons by assuring them that, although sharing their authority, governance still remains in the hands of those who have been designated as insiders. It seems preferable therefore that those whose presence is indispensable should be incorporated as allies rather than be perceived as an enemy force undermining the institution from within.

If a sign of indulging in the delights of donnish dominion is voting in Cambridge's Regent House and Oxford's Congregation then at both Universities large numbers besides dons actually have the right to vote; they are in fact members of the Governing Body. Moreover, some senior university officials are members of colleges with varying rights, and colleges have given fellowships to some of their own senior officers. At Oxford the colleges have elected to fellowships the Estate Bursars, almost all of the Domestic Bursars, some of the professional librarians, but, as yet, very few College Accountants. In a recent edition of *Oxford Magazine* Cambridge's crusading G.R. Evans wrote, 'The distinction of role of civil service and Minister does not transfer well into a university, especially one in which our higher administrators are themselves members of the Governing Body. To turn them from advisors to full participants in the decision-making would be to make better use of a relevant expertise. . . In our structures we – and for our own protection ought to have – no individual decision-makers but a truly collegial shared decision-making

into which we might consider allowing our senior administrators as full participants' (Evans, 1999b, pp. 6–7).

Within the collegial tradition the role of don and fellow was merged into that of policy-maker and official, but for some time the reverse process has been unfolding as officials become fellows and even part-time dons. And, it should also be noted, that this has occurred while dons transfer their loyalties from both the college and the University to the wider academic community and to the pursuit of their own careers. If the collegial tradition is in part underwritten by institutional loyalty then it may well have to look beyond the academic ranks for its survival.

Conclusion: A Temporary Thermidor?

After the storms generated by the proposals to reform Oxford's model of governance during the years of John Hood's vice-chancellorship, it would be easy to conclude that we have now entered the 11th month of the revolution. In as much as the activity is less fervid, certainly with less coverage of governance issues in both the *Oxford Magazine* and the *Gazette*, there is some evidence to support this proposition. However, one of the inherent characteristics of a federal model of governance is its inherent instability (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010, pp. 75–91). Thus we can expect steady developments within the collegiate university that will slowly imbalance further the internal distribution of power. For example, will Oxford replace its dual contract system with one of single contracts within which the authority of the University is augmented at the expense of the colleges (Baty, 1999, 29 January, p. 60; University of Oxford, 2009, 11 February)? Or, what will be the consequences of the proposed changes in the Colleges Contribution Scheme with suggestions that the tax should be increased for the next 10 years and then terminated (University of Oxford, 2008, 30 May)? These are but examples of the evolution of practices within the collegiate university, which impact upon the internal distribution of power and will reshape the future pattern of governance.

Similarly, will the impending cuts in the public funding of higher education ripple through from the Funding Council (HEFCE) to the University centrally and then from the University onto the colleges via the JRAM, leading to tensions that also restructure the balance of internal political power? Indeed, this could also generate parallel pressures amongst the colleges and even across the University's academic divisions. While the formal constitutional framework may not change, how it works in practice will evolve to reflect the new realities.

Even if Oxford resisted going down the route proposed by John Hood, it was still required to explain to HEFCE why it should have a model of governance that differs from all other British universities bar one. The University turned to Council's new Audit and Scrutiny Committee to undertake the task, and chaired by Nigel Turnbull it duly produced a report (University of Oxford, 2010, 9 January, http://www.ox.ac.uk/document.rm?id=849). The report presents a broad history of the changing character of the University's mode of governance and then proceeds to make its recommendations and, unsurprisingly, we find some that are unanimously

supported, while others are advocated by only a majority of committee members. Equally unsurprisingly, some of the old chestnuts reappear: who is to be Chair of Council (insider or layperson), the size and composition of Council and proposals for bringing Council and Congregation into a closer dialogue. Naturally, Council has taken time to consider the Report and it was placed on the University's website to encourage further reflection. And, as Council noted, 'Any legislation ultimately resulting from this process would of course require the approval of Congregation' (University of Oxford, 2010, 9 January, http://www.ox.ac.uk/governance/). It is impossible not to be struck by a sense of *déjà vu.*

This is not to say that we can expect yet another intense period of turmoil to match those of the Hood years. Undoubtedly, the new vice-chancellor, Andrew Hamilton, will realise that the University cannot inflict upon itself another bout of pain so soon after the prior fracas. It may well be that Council (on behalf of the university) will decide on a neutral strategy – to explain to HEFCE Oxford's unique system of governance, claim that it has functioned reasonably smoothly and suggest that it is evolving – as it has always been true – over time. In spite of the comfortable defeat of the Hood proposals, there is recognition by many parties that the system is defective, but what has to develop is a broad consensus (unanimity is impossible) on what is defective and how it should be remedied. Oxford will not require, post-Thermidor, a Napoleon to construct the way forward but collegiality needs to demonstrate more inventiveness and flexibility if the circle is to be squared. Moreover, the omens may be more favourably disposed towards securing a successful outcome. The global economic crisis has shown that the management of the private sector, especially its financial arm, is not necessarily a model to be replicated. Perhaps after all it is safer to have university councils under the control of amateur academics rather than laypersons drawn from the private sector. But how then to give a constructive, rather than a spoiling, role to Congregation?

Chapter 8
Finance: The Well-Endowed Corporation?

College autonomy in these fundamental matters [election of fellows, selection of students, management of endowment] sustains a corporate life and spirit quite unlike that of a hall of residence or department.

(Franks Report, 1966a)

The college fees in Oxford and Cambridge represent a substantial addition to the standard funding for institutions of higher education. We propose that the Government reviews them . . .

(Dearing Report, 1997)

Introduction

Collegiality costs money. Indirectly because dons spend time being involved in college governance and college administration and also because of the inevitable diseconomies of scale compared with a large centrally structured university. Or directly in terms of providing and maintaining buildings, library stock, sports facilities, common rooms, catering, tutorial teaching and even choirs (e.g. Magdalen, Christ Church and New College as choral colleges). This chapter is about the extent of that cost, about criticisms of that spending, about how colleges generate the income to cover their costs and about the sustainability of that expenditure, without which collegiality in its iconic and present Oxford form just cannot survive.

The cost of collegiality at the university level in the form of a time-consuming and labour-intensive committee structure is even more indirect and difficult to assess. But suffice to note here that the mistakes of 'rampant managerialism' can also be expensive. For example, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) a decade ago spent some £7½ m to bail out Thames Valley University following the collapse of aspects of its teaching quality; however, it remains to be seen whether the recent governance and management debacle at London Metropolitan University, involving HEFCE attempting to recover some £35m of mis-allocated public money, will lead to any net loss for the taxpayer. Similarly, in the late 1980s, the University Grants Committee (UGC) had to provide a financial rescue package

T. Tapper, D. Palfreyman, *Oxford, the Collegiate University*, Higher Education Dynamics 34, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0047-5_8,

for the effectively bankrupt University College, Cardiff. Collegial checks and balances in the governance of that chartered university had completely broken down as the lay Council improperly allowed an incompetent Principal to behave as an irresponsible chief executive (Shattock, 1994, pp. 113–127; see also, on such crises generally in UK HEIs, Warner & Palfreyman, 2001).

Periodic Scrutiny, the 1850–1990s

The cost of collegiality has long been recognised as a political issue and was addressed in the Reports of the nineteenth century Commissions, the 1920s' Royal Commission, the 1960s' Franks Commission of Inquiry and the 1990s' North Commission. Furthermore, there has been over the past decade the phased reduction of the public funding of Oxbridge college academic fees that were formerly paid on behalf of British students by their LEAs (Local Education Authorities) and, as part of the cuts in public funding for 2010/2011, now the removal of their last vestiges in the form of some £5m per annum 'special factors' money paid by HEFCE to Oxford.

The Victorians investigated Oxford twice, in the 1850s and in the 1870s, and on both occasions there was talk of whether college endowments were being properly used or whether they should be redeployed towards the University itself, to be spent on professors and academic research rather than tutors and undergraduate teaching. There was also some discussion as to whether students could not be offered a cheaper option of residence in halls or lodgings, rather than being obliged to be members of, and reside in, grand costly colleges. Furthermore, there was some analysis of the efficiency of college-accounting mechanisms, whether college assets (mainly in the form of agricultural land) were effectively managed, if increasing undergraduate numbers was a source of real extra revenue or merely the dilution of the precious income flow from endowment and whether the domestic affairs of colleges were being competently and economically run.

The upshot was the standardisation of college accounts, the taxation of college wealth to supply resources for 'University purposes' (mainly the creation of professorial posts) and slow improvements in college domestic management. Colleges remained, however, very dependent on general endowment yield, collectively to the level of c60% of their income, with student fees counting for most of the rest. The poorly endowed colleges were much more reliant on academic fees and hence had to spread overheads across a growing student fee-paying population. However, fees were constrained within a fairly tight band by the risk of consumer resistance and the consequence of empty places if a college pushed fees up too far (note that the fierce demand for Oxbridge places is a post-1945 phenomenon). More students often also meant the cost of building extra student accommodation, although increasingly students began to live in lodgings, about one-third by 1900 (Day, 1997, pp. 460–461; Greenstein, 1994, p. 47; Harrison, 1994, p. 98).

Very much the same issues were on the agenda of the twentieth century scrutinies of Oxbridge, although Cambridge seems to get by with a little less navel-gazing.

Moreover, in Oxford the Commissions' agendas, dominated in relation to the colleges by discussions about costs and value-for-money, have so far yielded rather similar results to the nineteenth century reports, while the comparatively recent North Commission's ramifications have not much impacted on the internal structure and management of the colleges.

The Asquith Commission (1919–1922) rejected, as had its nineteenth century predecessors, the pooling of college endowments for their more efficient management and their redirection in support of the University. The Commission recognised that living in college was expensive for students and hence championed more non-collegiate places for the poor. Its Report paid homage to the collegiate system: 'It has proved a strong motive for individual activity among graduates and undergraduates that has served to enrich the life and learning of the Universities, especially in recent times. It has made academic life more interesting and forms a great part of the attraction that makes so many of the best students desire to come to Oxford and Cambridge'. And it sums up with more glowing words '. . . we regard the principle of College independence, within its proper limits, as highly beneficial both to the Universities and to the public interest, and as helping to supply the nation with the highest type of learned and educational society' (Asquith Commission, 1922a, pp. 14–15).

But the Report recognised that collegiality was costly with its labour-intensive teaching style, its provision of commensality and the need to function within a largely medieval infrastructure: 'If complaint is made the education at Oxford and Cambridge costs more per man than elsewhere, one reason is that the undergraduate gets more teaching in return for his money, over and above the peculiar residential advantages'. Furthermore, 'another cause of the high cost of education at Oxford and Cambridge is the maintenance of the beautiful old College buildings and the whole apparatus of Collegiate life' (Asquith Commission, 1922a, pp. 38–39) – it was this aspect that had preserved some of the college fee money as the £5m per annum 'special factor' HEFCE grant referred to above. But the Royal Commission paid due attention to accessibility: 'Another danger is the accessibility of Oxford and Cambridge to poorer students. If help is not forthcoming from outside, the Universities will be forced to raise their fees to an excessive degree that must exclude many students not only of the artisan but of the professional class' (Asquith Commission, 1922a, p. 53). The Asquith Commission was concerned that the Oxbridge colleges should not resolve their financial problems by becoming too dependent upon the idle rich. But the image of Oxford presented in Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* would suggest that the Commission failed to acknowledge that the University was at that time as much recruiting/selecting feckless wealthy young men as those of ability and industry whom it wished to encourage.

The Commission's analysis of residential costs was thorough, comparing 'hostels at newer universities' (£3 12s per week) with Oxford's non-collegiate arrangements (£2 15s) and the Oxford colleges themselves (ranging from £3 16s 9d to £6 18s 6d), and noting that hence 'the cost of living at the men's Colleges is considerably in excess of the cost elsewhere'. Women at the female colleges lived rather more frugally and hence more economically. While acknowledging 'the expense of

maintaining spacious medieval buildings and gardens', the Report is still forced to conclude that the cost of residential accommodation is 'too high and should be reduced'. Thus, the Commissioners suggested bed-sitting rooms rather than 'sets' (study plus bedroom), the construction of more economical accommodation, increased lodgings provision, 'Co-operative Laundries', curtailing the opportunity for servants to levy extra charges and the provision of more detailed information to parents about all charges. Aware that things slip over the years, the Report exhorted that such economies 'shall be secured in all Colleges alike, and *maintained permanently* in all Colleges in future years' (Asquith Commission, 1922a, p. 145, original emphasis).

The catering arrangements (having been studied by an expert from the catering arm of the Midland Railway Company no less, and even a civil servant from the Ministry of Food) were criticised for sloppy purchasing, poor accounting, weak controls over stock and employing too many cooks (but it is unknown whether the surfeit of cooks spoilt the institutional broth given the Report did not comment on food quality!). Hence the Commission called for 'some measure of external supervision' from 'a University Control Board' while rejecting the idea of a University-run 'Central Catering Department' as an undue intrusion into college autonomy. The Commission also called for the charging of the full economic cost for 'meals served in private rooms' (Asquith Commission, 1922a, pp. 146–155).

Prior to the Commission, in the face of University attempts to tax the Oxford colleges, President Cage of Corpus had offered a spirited defence of college financial independence (Palfreyman, 1997, p. 61). And the Commission, in spite of its strictures and proposed financial reforms, firmly rejected the proposals of the Oxford Reform Committee for college finances to be controlled by the University. In the eyes of the Commissioners such a change would mean that the colleges 'would no longer be independent bodies administering their own funds ... with a full sense of responsibility and complete freedom of initiative, but would become dependent bodies executing the policy of the University and unable to initiate new schemes of expenditure without University approval'. A constant theme in the Report is the need to sustain college independence and 'wholesome competition with one another'. In the estimate of the commissioners a vigorous collegiate university was dependent on limiting university control and enabling the colleges to initiate new policies (Asquith Commission, 1922a, pp. 200–201). But a Minority Report dissented and called for the University Offices to administer all endowment assets in the name of greater efficiency and economy, instead of leaving such matters to 'gentlemen amateur' college bursars – 'some of whom are not well qualified for their present duties'! (Asquith Commission, 1922a, p. 255). This theme of pooled endowment recurs to this day in the minds of reformers, but with no clear evidence that big is necessarily automatically and unfailingly beautiful (Acharya & Dimson, 2007).

The Franks Commission (1964–1966) similarly praised colleges and their commensality: asserting that a corporate life and spirit of a college is quite unlike that of a hall of residence or a department, but also recognised that 'the college system is expensive' with the costs of Oxford greater than those of almost all other British universities' (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 156). This additional cost was

covered mainly by endowment income and also by charging students more for residential accommodation compared to other British universities (an average of £280 per annum at Oxford, compared to £140–£172 at Durham, Manchester, Bristol – University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 161) – by 2010 the charges for the standard, now increasingly en suite, student bedroom have largely evened out (with only London HEIs charging significantly more than the median). The Report addressed 'the two principal criticisms' of Oxford: whether 'the amenities of student life are excessive' and whether the domestic management of the colleges 'is not as economical and efficient as it should be' (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 162). The same defence to the former charge was presented as invoked by the Asquith Commission: Oxford's 'many buildings of historic and architectural importance combine the disadvantages of being expensive to maintain and uncomfortable to inhabit' (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 162). Similarly, a plea of partially guilty was entered in relation to inefficient 'housekeeping': 'best practices' should be identified and shared amongst colleges and colleges should 'be much more collectively self-conscious about the need for economy in domestic matters than they have been' (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 169). The Report additionally recognised the need for catering expertise, a recommendation – as it noted wryly – of the 1922 Royal Commission. And the accounts required, yet again, an entirely new common format.

But a plea of innocence was lodged against the charge of supplying luxurious and extravagant meals to students (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 163) and the regular complaints in JCR 'Food Books' given as evidence of such innocence. The provision of free meals for dons is defended as 'an integral part of college life' and – perhaps with a hint of irony – it was noted that they always paid for their 'nuts and wine' (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 182). In the context of academic salaries being generally 'too low in this country' and the claim that within Oxford there was a 'higher than average concentration of talent', a premium of 10% on salaries over other UK universities was felt to be a reasonable extra expense and an appropriate use of endowment income (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 184).

A major change instigated by the Franks Report was to divert the taxation receipts from the richer colleges to the support of their poorer brethren, rather than for 'University purposes': ' . . . The colleges should, through a contributions system, take on a collective responsibility for the financial aid of those colleges that are poorly endowed. Without such aid and co-operation, the collegiate system as a whole will fail to develop as it should, and no college, however wealthy, will in the end be unaffected' (University of Oxford, 1966a, p. 285; see also Palfreyman, 1997; Picarda, 1997). The Franks Report, therefore, is supporting the idea of a collegiate system in which the individual colleges have moral responsibility to come to the aid of one another. While, like the much earlier Asquith Commission, the Franks Report comes out against the pooling of endowment income, its stress is more on the collective sense of collegiate identity rather than the need to ensure a healthy competition amongst colleges. Self-evidently there is a tension between competition and co-operation and how a constructive balance between the two can be sustained.

The Report of the North Commission (1995–1997) follows familiar lines. It recognises 'the strength and vitality of a collegiate university system', but also

concedes that this is not without its costs, which are justified because 'of the advantages of such a system' (University of Oxford, 1997a, p. 26). Of course the college accounts need to be presented in a newly revised format (!) for the 'lack of clear information . . . can lead to misunderstanding and misrepresentation . . . a somewhat unhealthy mystique attached to the way in which colleges spend their income. . . Greater openness . . . would blunt criticisms which are sometimes levelled at Oxford' (University of Oxford, 1997a, p. 226). In addition, the college contributions/taxation arrangements need to be enhanced by 'a new redistributive mechanism', in order to reduce the gap between rich and poor colleges; large differences in 'the remuneration package' for dons and 'the student experience' between colleges should be ironed out (University of Oxford, 1997a, pp. 227–231). North appears to be taking the Franks Report one step further: not only is there a collegiate system founded in part upon the principle of mutual support but also it is necessary to narrow its internal distinctive characteristics.

These inquiries into the financial affairs of Oxbridge have revealed some persistent critical themes. There is the widely acknowledged additional expense of maintaining the collegiate universities over the costs of running other UK universities. Can this additional expense be justified in relation to the outputs achieved? Even if much of the extra financial input derives from returns on the private endowment assets held by the colleges as independent corporations, the critics would argue that such assets should be pooled. They could then allegedly be more efficiently managed and more fairly distributed. Furthermore, the income arising should be used for different and better purposes, while any additional taxpayer funding to Oxbridge should be significantly reduced. And in such circumstances would there emerge an even more healthy collegiate system composed of individual colleges sharing equitably a pooled endowment income ('from each according to his means, to each according to his needs')? And, course, acting co-operatively in the interests of the whole? Or would it be parsimony, even misery, all round as the collegial dimension of the collegiate university slowly sunk into the mire?

College Finances: Let the Evidence Speak for Itself

One major critique of Oxbridge is the readable diatribe from Walter Ellis: 'They adapt, they modernise, but they do not change. . . the inestimable self-belief engendered by 800 years of triumph' (1994, p. 23). And he directs some of his sharpest criticisms at the financial advantages that Oxbridge colleges enjoy, arguing that their 'effortless superiority' is based on privilege and wealth, and asks: 'What Oxbridge wants is to be left alone to pick and choose what it wants to do, and the question is: should we be paying them quite so handsomely for excluding the rest of us from the debate' (1994, p. 224)? The end result is not just unfair but 'almost criminally wasteful'.

So, just how handsomely does (or, rather, did) the British taxpayer fund Oxbridge, over and above the level of public support for the financing of other universities? How much is the endowment of the colleges worth and where does

the income go? Are the college finances still poorly managed by dozy Dons and bumbling Bursars?

At Oxford there are 38 colleges created between the mid-thirteenth century (University, 1249, Balliol, 1263, Merton, 1264) and the present day (Harris-Manchester, 1996, Mansfield, 1995, St Catherine's, 1963, Wolfson, 1966). They vary in size from around 300 to over 600 students and from 30 to 60 or so Dons. Their total income in 1995/1996, as analysed in the North Report, was c£120 m (compared to the University's income of c£275 m) and broke down into the following categories: £38m was academic fees of which the UK taxpayer paid £31m; £35m took the form of charges to students for residential accommodation and catering; £43m was endowment income; and £4m comprised grants/donations. The percentage of endowment income for each college varies from 10 to 60%, averaging 35%. The total endowment capital for Oxford as a whole (at c£1.5b) was, back then, modest compared with the likes of Harvard, Yale or Princeton (respectively, £5.7b, £3b and £2.75b). The Oxford colleges tended to have a higher spend rate (4.7%) than American institutions (4.1–4.3%), risking the danger that in the long term capital will be eroded. The broad financial picture a decade on is roughly similar: colleges are, however, a little more dependent on endowment income and/or conference trade earnings as compared to public funding; the endowments at the likes of Harvard or Yale surged ahead in the early part of the past 15 years but have fallen back to a greater extent in the 2007–2010 credit-crunch and recession, and the spend rate is now around 3.5–4%.

The mid-1990s' position at the time of the North Commission had the tuition fees for undergraduates at major private US universities in the order of £13,000 per annum. This compared with c£6,000 at Oxford (college fee *and* university fee *and* HEFCE block-grant for teaching), but admittedly £6,000 was in turn c£2,000 per annum per student higher than at other UK universities because of the payment of the college academic fee. The college academic fee was nominally at c£3,000 per annum on average, and within a ±15% range across the colleges, but the real additional value to Oxford as a whole was reduced by the fact that the HEFCE block-grant to the University itself was rebated by some 40% in recognition of college fees. The North Report estimated that, if Oxford went 'private', some £2b of additional endowment would be needed to replace the current funding from the British taxpayer at c£85m and would, it argued (rather feebly and defeatedly), take a century to raise (University of Oxford, 1997a, pp. 220–221).

Thus, while asserting its autonomy, Oxford, it seems, would effectively remain part of a British 'nationalised' system of higher education. Meanwhile, it would attempt, like other British 'research' universities, to compete with more generously funded private US institutions that have greater endowments *and* perhaps crucially the political freedom to charge their students more realistic fees, as increasingly do Australian universities. However, up to now Government policy, supported by legislation, has prevented British HEIs from charging 'top-up' fees above the established yearly flat-rate of originally £1,000 (introduced in 1998/1999) and later increased to £3,000 after a bitter struggle in the Commons (now at c£3,250 with inflation) for each UK/EU student, although this is currently under review.

As noted earlier, by 2010 the college tuition fee and then HEFCE special factors premium payable to Oxford (and Cambridge) had disappeared – although colleges still charge non-UK/EU undergraduates a college tuition fee of £5K per annum. Colleges now receive, via the internal University resource allocation model ('the JRAM'), a share of the HEFCE Teaching block-grant transferred to Oxford on the same formula as for any other HEFCE-funded university: £3,900 per annum for a Humanities/Social Sciences undergraduate, £6,750 for a Science subject and c£16,500 for Clinical Medicine. This is 'the unit of resource', and, compared to a base of 100 in 1970, it is now at c60 for HEIs in England and Wales (and, depending on how HE fares in the further likely cuts in public spending may well fall to some 50% of its level in 1970).

Given that Oxford has, also lost its college fees or 'special factors' money, the collapse in the unit of resource is, of course, much greater. And the staff–student ratio at Oxford and also the 1:2 tutorial teaching format have each remained pretty well unchanged compared to a 50% or more deterioration in the former and a shift from seminars of 6–8–10 to seminars of 15–20 (even 25) elsewhere. Even UCL or LSE never had the luxury of 1:2 teaching arrangements, and the key issue is whether Oxford can continue to stretch endowment yield to plug the gap in public funding so as to maintain its USP of 'The Oxford Tutorial' (Palfreyman, 2008a).

The cost of the Oxford commitment to undergraduate teaching was explored in a review undertaken by the Oxford Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (OxCHEPS/Ulanov Partnership, 2004), which compared Oxford to some of its US competitors (Harvard, Princeton, Berkeley). The OxCHEPS Report calculated the annual cost of educating an Oxford undergraduate at c£18,500 in 2002/2003 (as a weighted average of Humanities at c£17,000 and Science at c£21,000). If one removes costs relating to research activity at Oxford and calculates the figure for the direct teaching inputs, we get c£14,000 rather than c£18,500. The comparable figure to the £18,500 at major US universities was, again for 2002/2003, c£63K at Princeton and c£58K at Harvard! Of Oxford's £18,500 some £7,500 is spent at the college level as opposed to financing University lectures, labs and libraries: the figure of £7,500 changes little if expenditure on research is removed given that most such expenditure is at the University level (hence more than half of the alternative figure of c£14,000 is college-related). The cost per year per undergraduate at c£18,500 was mainly met from the following: a very modest tuition fee (£1,100 back in 2002/2003), from endowment yield (c£3,000), from earnings on conferences and room/catering charges to students (c£4,000) and from the taxpayer (c£9,000) – hence in all a public–private split of roughly 50–50 (the taxpayer, however, will have retreated to below 50% by the time the present round of public spending cuts have been fully implemented). The reason why Princeton and Harvard spend so very much per undergraduate per year is, clearly, in part because they can afford to and partly because they pay their academics rather better (50% more than at Oxford at the former and 75% more than at the latter) – and their undergraduate–don ratio is half of Oxford's (more pay for less teaching!), as well as spending a lot more on support staff and on buildings' maintenance or new buildings.

The colleges, according to the North Report, charged students for residence within a 15/20% band. The lower end was set at about the same weekly rate as for halls of residence in those universities that compete for the same student clientele, but the upper end for a 25-week residential year was probably ahead of the annual total charges that the students at such other universities pay for 30 weeks. A decade or so later the range within the band has probably moved to 10/15% and other HEIs now have some pretty high rent levels for their new 'jacuzzi-in-the-dorm' style residences! Moreover, many universities lock students into a 39-week, or even a 50-week, residential contract, and hence charge more per annum than do most Oxford colleges. It certainly can no longer be said that being 'in residence' at most Oxbridge colleges is undoubtedly more expensive than being in university accommodation elsewhere, as was clearly the case at the time of Franks 1960s' Inquiry and the Asquith 1920s' Commission.

Moreover, Oxford still gives 'vacation grants' to undergraduates to 'stay up' when preparing for 'finals', a piece of largesse long-since abolished at virtually every other UK university. More significantly, it has much greater access to trust fund money to relieve student hardship. Thus, at many Oxford colleges students resident in college can probably live more cheaply over the degree course than is the case at most other elite British universities. Of course the private rental markets make it difficult to compare costs but this market is expensive in Oxford and there may be cheaper private rented accommodation near other elite universities. In addition, the value of the 'Oxford Bursaries' for poorer students, at almost £4K per annum, means that the 15–20% of Oxford UK undergraduates from less well-off families are now probably better off than ever before (even perhaps than in the 1960s when State grants for students were keeping pace with inflation, compared to the 1970s and the 1980s).

When colleges do not have students in residence during the vacations they use the rooms for 'the conference trade', some generating more than £1m per annum from their very successful hotel activities, at which they work with a high degree of professionalism. Other forms of earned-income are minor, although colleges increasingly do a profitable line in having American students as 'Associate Students' or 'Visiting Students' during their 'Junior Year Abroad'. A few grander ones even earn a useful amount on tourist entry charges, and even on 'Inspector Morse' or 'Harry Potter' filming. That leaves endowment yield as *the* major source of income for some colleges and a significant source of income for many. St John's is the richest Oxford college, but even so has an endowment income at only about one-third that of Trinity, Cambridge! The 'big boys' are All Soul's, Christ Church, Jesus, New College, Nuffield, Magdalen, Merton, Queen's, St John's and University. These are the tax-paying colleges, which under the college contributions scheme help the 'poor' half-dozen or so. Some fifteen colleges are neither donors to, nor recipients of, the college contribution that since the mid-1960s has shifted some £100m at 2010 prices from the rich to the poor – but 'the poor' are still very much with us. Some colleges have moved up the table as a result of cunning investment management, hard work with generous benefactors, sheer luck in making investments or good fortune in attracting wealthy benefactors.

It would, however, be naive to expect the need for the redistribution ever to end. Even if the poorer colleges build up their endowment, there would undoubtedly be a demand for help with new buildings or refurbishing existing ones. The nub of the problem is that Oxford lacks the endowment capital base to support the infrastructure needed to service its present 19,000 or so students. For long-term survival, the endowment capital has to be increased or the costs radically reduced (possibly by way of greater inter-college collaboration, if not formal mergers – see Palfreyman, Thomas, & Warner, 1998). Or students will have to be charged realistic fees if the taxpayer will not pay on their behalf, beyond the capped levels of £1,000 and then £3,000 as phased in over the past decade or so ('capped' in the sense of being regulated – fixed initially at £1,000 and then raised to £3,000, and allowed to increase only in line with RPI – in fact, like all service industries, university costs increase more than by RPI, at, say, RPI + 1.5/2%).

Some colleges, of course, have much greater liabilities in relation to their stock of buildings than others. New College, for example, has spent over £10m on conserving the 1380s stained-glass in its Ante-Chapel and c£20m on upgrading its residential staircases, and can easily spend £0.5m releading a section of roof and rebuilding a few chimney-stacks, or even £1m or £2m on refacing decayed stone-work or (somewhat less glamorously) replacing decrepit electrical wiring, lead water pipes and leaking gas pipes. There is also the issue of keeping up to date with fire detection and alarm systems, with the provision of the Internet and with comfort levels expected by conference visitors and students/their parents. The recent extensive refurbishment of its bedrooms, installing (somewhat belatedly) central heating and for once, somewhat ahead of its time – in Oxford terms if not compared with the more go-ahead UK universities such as Warwick and Birmingham – *en suite* facilities and telephones in student bedrooms. This is at a cost that has to include VAT payable on repairs (but not alterations) to Listed Buildings, and all with no Government grants of any kind.

Table 8.1 gives the capital per college at 1/8/08 and at 31/7/09, showing the negative input of the 07/08 credit-crunch and of the 08/09 recession on college wealth. If 3.5% is assumed as the prudent yield this gives *roughly* the endowment income per college. Of course, a college may be spending too much (4% +) and hence be risking the erosion of capital and possibly risking breach of trust/fiduciary duty on the part of the fellows (even facing possible personal liability to compensate the college) or spending too little (<3%). Either way, this may invite a challenge as to whether the college is failing to carry out its charitable objectives as an exempt charity, but a 3.5–4% range is a balance between the pressing needs of today and the fiduciary obligation to leave enough for future generations to meet their equally pressing needs. The real figures for endowment capital have traditionally been jealously guarded by Bursars and were not revealed in the Franks Accounts, but the colleges voluntarily changed their accounting practices so as to provide such capital figures, in line with the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for charities, and thereby perhaps removing some of 'the unhealthy mystique' referred to earlier – moreover, since the colleges became registered charities (from Summer, 2010), they have had to prepare accounts using the Charity SORP, which requires full disclosure.

Table 8.1 Endowment capital, 2008/2009 (£m)

	College	1/8/08	31/7/09	U/GS (1/12/09)	Per U/G (31/7/09) (£K)	Top 10 Ec Per U/G
1	All Souls	227	198	–	–	
2	Balliol	61.5	53.5	383	140	
3	Brasenose	81	72	365	200	
4	Christ Church	254	259	438	590	2
5	Corpus Christi	58.5	61	248	245	
6	Exeter	45.5	42.5	343	125	
7	Green Templeton	1	2	96	20	
8	Harris Manchester	6	7	85	80	
9	Hertford	39	35.5	396	90	
10	Jesus	140	126	347	365	5
11	Keble	23	22.5	423	55	
12	Lady Margaret Hall	26	21.5	400	55	
13	Linacre	7.5	7	–	–	
14	Lincoln	60	56	318	175	
15	Magdalen	154	125	415	300	6
16	Mansfield	9	8.5	226	40	
17	Merton	145	137	314	435	3
18	New College	131.5	123	418	295	7
19	Nuffield	141	126.5	–	–	
20	Oriel	59	57	302	190	10
21	Pembroke	36	32.5	367	90	
22	Queens	144	137	343	400	4
23	St. Anne's	24.5	22	444	50	
24	St. Anthony's	28	26	–	–	
25	St. Catherine's	40.5	34	499	70	
26	St. Edmund Hall	27	25	404	60	
27	St. Hilda's	31.5	28	398	70	
28	St. Hugh's	20	21	397	55	
20	St. John's	300	277	399	695	1
30	St. Peter's	24.5	23	348	65	
31	Somerville	39	34	401	85	
32	Trinity	67	66	300	220	9
33	University	94	87	364	235	8
34	Wadham	60	57	458	125	
35	Wolfson	29.5	24.5	–	–	
36	Worcester	17.5	16	416	40	
	Total	c2,650	c2,450	c11,500	–	

Per U/G: endowment capital per undergraduate; top 10 EC per U/G: endowment capital of top 10 colleges per undergraduate; U/Gs: undergraduate numbers.

The endowment capital is held for each college mainly as an investment portfolio of equities and gilts/bonds, usually professionally managed on an active discretionary basis by a City of London fund manager, but also in commercial property and agricultural land (see Acharya & Dimson, 2007, for extensive discussion). Commercial property is often directly held in a small and sometimes somewhat eclectic 'empire'; agricultural land is still held in greater proportions by the older

colleges and constitutes something of a legacy from the days before equities and bonds. Occasionally land is retained for sentimental reasons but, hopefully, more because of its potential for strategic development in Local Plans; conversion to building land can see a 100-fold increase in value per acre. New College has some 10,000 acres, but, sadly, *not* all has such development potential! (A chunk at Aylesbury did, however, sell for over £60m in 2004/2005 when after some 15 years of effort planning permission for 800 houses was achieved.)

Oxford Estates Bursars meet and 'network' regularly, along with their Cambridge colleagues, to discuss such matters as VAT, corporation tax, investment strategy, rating revaluation, charity law, trust law, employment law, catering contracts and building contracts. They might explore the possibility of such things as the once fashionable and very profitable Business Expansion Schemes (BES), consider a collective trust vehicle for the more diversified and economic management of commercial property and even contemplate an Oxbridge colleges corporate bond for raising 'cheap' money with which to finance the costly maintenance and refurbishment of the infrastructure while leaving endowment capital intact and so achieving (with luck) an arbitrage on interest rates in relation to total return within the endowment portfolio.

Similarly, the Domestic Bursars meet, as do the College Accountants. Such meetings are a proper and serious response to any suggestion in the 1922 Royal Commission Report or 1966 Franks Report that colleges are not generally efficient. Although the colleges will always have diseconomies of scale, they do now (admittedly belatedly) attempt to counter this by getting together for food purchasing, acquiring some insurance block-policies and sharing the costs of legal and accounting advice on common matters. This extends even to the point of sharing litigation costs with college X as 'a test case' in challenging, for example, Thames Water's imposition of 'infrastructure charges' for connecting new buildings or Her Majesty's Revenue and Custom's interpretation of Stamp Duty rules in relation to college property purchases, employing jointly a fire safety officer and signing a joint contract for health and safety consultancy. The reality of the achievement of 'good practice' and its sharing amongst colleges by the effective 'networking' of Estates Bursars, Domestic Bursars and College Accountants is far more impressive than the image lovingly painted by the critics of colleges who allege insularity, incompetence and managerial backwardness.

However, as with all organisations, there is always more to strive for and, occasionally, a college appoints an incompetent Bursar or Accountant, or a perfectly competent Bursar is unable to persuade the Governing Body to bite the bullet and face up to reality. Of course views on these matters will vary and some will be very critical. In Kenny and Kenny (2007, pp. 62–79) it is noted that in 2005/2006 the University and the collective of colleges together had an income of just over £800m, mainly coming from the following: HEFCE (£166m: £90m for research, £60m for teaching, £16m 'special factors'); research grants £216m and endowment £110m (a c3% spend rate from some £3b held by the University (c£625m) and mainly within the colleges at £2.4b). On top of all this is Oxford University Press (OUP), with a revenue of c£450m generating a surplus of c£70m (half of which was

transferred to support University expenditure). The authors ask: 'Does Oxford provide value for money?' and conclude that, given the public–private mix of funding, the taxpayer gets 'an excellent deal' – but they are concerned about 'the distorting effect of fragmentation of the university' and the 'diseconomy of subdivision' that results (despite the fact that, as they acknowledge, 'the colleges are increasingly co-operating with each other and with the university to make the most of their combined scale'). They also think Oxford has been slow in tapping into alumni fundraising, but their most significant point is to seek 'an aggregate approach', in effect a pooling of colleges' endowment capital and income, since otherwise the situation is 'not optimal from Oxford's perspective' (Kenny & Kenny, 2007, p. 78). Thus, their proposed reforms, set out throughout the book, aim to avoid the risk of 'obstruction by maverick institutions' to correct 'the bureaucratic disadvantages of the college system', to rectify 'Oxford's tardiness in reaching decisions', to achieve 'an appreciable redistribution of wealth' and to overcome 'the disadvantages of compartmentalised endowments'.

In essence, they 'do not believe that total college autonomy is a paramount objective in itself', and they do not want Oxford as a whole to gain its freedom from the State (to make a 'Declaration of Independence?') since they see this as impractical in financial terms. They instead want it to reform itself in ways discussed elsewhere in their book (including 'substantial transfers of funds from the colleges to the central university' as well as from richer to poorer colleges). However, on the issue of the 'disadvantages of compartmentalised endowments', the study of Oxford & Cambridge colleges' management of their endowments by Acharya and Dimson (2007) does not support such a concept of aggregating/pooling. As it happens, the Kennys' proposals have so far fallen on deaf ears, but perhaps the increased tension within Oxford that can be predicted to flow from the impending cuts in the public funding of the University will bring this package of proposed internal reforms back on to the Oxford agenda and re-open the question of what model of the collegiate university should prevail.

Turning to *the New College accounts* (2008/2009) as fairly typical of one of Oxford's larger and richer colleges, the profile of income and expenditure is broadly as follows (these 'official' accounts are viewable at the College's website – http://www.new.ox.ac.uk/ – and will, from 2010 to 2011, also be at the Charity Commission website). The 'financial accounts' are supported by 'management accounts' used for internal decision-making and which essentially divide the College into 'cost' and 'profit' centres, there naturally being, as in any (quasi-) public sector organisation, rather more of the former than the latter! Thus, the gross endowment income is divided into two types: that arising from the portfolio of equities/gilts/bonds and that from the agricultural estate/commercial property. It has deducted from it the costs of managing the endowment, including fees to the fund managers, salary of the Land Agent, legal costs, planning consultancy, repairs and maintenance, insurance and even the modest cost (c£1,000) for the tenant farmers' Christmas Lunch, leaving a net endowment income.

This net income, less the 'college contribution' (the internal tax on the richer colleges to support the poorer colleges) of some £250K, is the surplus on this key 'profit

centre' available to fund 'the cost centres': general administration, overheads (insurance, electricity, gas, water, rates), premises maintenance (including a small 'direct works' department and garden maintenance contracts), the tuition account (mainly the salaries of fellows/lecturers and academic administration), library, chapel and choir, domestic management of the college accommodation and catering. The other sources of revenue are tuition fees, student accommodation and catering charges, and conference income.

The direct teaching expenses of New College are just covered by the income from the University routed through its resource allocation model (the JRAM) that shares public funding with the colleges and from tuition fees directly collected. The endowment income is needed to cover administration, overheads, premises, chapel and choir, and the shortfall on accommodation and catering. The endowment income will be stretched further by needing to cover the 2010–2013 anticipated significant cuts in public funding for higher education and hence a reduction in the JRAM transfer. The cost of collegiality as commensality is contained partly in that deficit that arises from the diseconomies of scale in the running of the accommodation and catering services, the costs of corporate hospitality, the lunches and dinners for fellows/lecturers (the 'common table') and in the staffing of the SCR to serve those meals.

The cost for such commensality is less than 3% of the total expenditure and comes from the endowment (not from the taxpayer). Here it should be noted that the endowment income is 'private' (charitable) rather than 'public' (taxpayer) funds and that the dons are in effect one of the charitable purposes or beneficiaries of that endowment, along with students, the choir and the buildings. In that sense the fellows, in being the managing fiduciaries of the corporation and the trustees of the exempt charity, as well as at the same time being also beneficiaries of the charitable purposes of the corporation, are *sui generis* in terms of charity law/trust law (Palfreyman, 1996, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; and more generally for the impact of charity law on universities see Farrington & Palfreyman, 2006, Chapter 7).

Hence, it is *not* the case that public money in most colleges supports collegiality as commensality. Since the JRAM and tuition fee income is swallowed up by direct academic costs and certainly does not cover all buildings costs, the colleges need endowment income to function. Consequently, the Oxbridge college is an example of a public–private partnership. Students, financed at least in part by the state, access a partially private-funded institution that provides labour-intensive tuition and an often well-stocked library, all located within the congenial surroundings of costly to maintain and run Listed Buildings.

In addition, New College is supported by a Registered Charity (the New College Development Fund, No. 900202). The charity's accounts are lodged with the Charity Commission and hence are also in the public domain (and viewable at the College website, http://www.new.ox.ac.uk/). Its capital consists mainly of donations from its Old Members (alumni), trusts, foundations and companies. Much of the capital is permanent endowment for the support of fellowships, of Junior Research fellowships and of student hardship bursaries, and some is for spending on one-off capital projects such as new student residential accommodation. Some £10.5m is thus held

long-term and generates a further c£500K income: these figures are a 'Note' within the College accounts and the College's 'tax liability' (the amount calculated under the College Contributions scheme) includes tax payable on the income of this, as it were, associated charity. Finally, there is New College Choir School, in effect, a wholly owned subsidiary of New College. It is a small preparatory school for some 145 boys aged 7–13 with a turnover of over £1 m per annum. It breaks-even (just) and supplies the choristers New College needs to fulfil one of its Founder's statutory requirements and its charitable objective of being a choral college: its turnover is consolidated within the College's accounts, given that it is effectively a dependent of the College.

A final point in terms of collegiality as commensality is to note that the provision of student catering and residential accommodation at universities beyond Oxford and Cambridge has at least to break-even under the rules of the funding councils and certainly should incur no subsidy from public funds. However, the Oxbridge colleges, since they received no direct supply of public funds (their historic charging of academic fees met in recent decades by LEAs was deemed to be a private payment made by the students rather than a grant from Government), were not subject to the HEFCE regime. This is just as well since it is virtually impossible in management accounting terms to separate out the running costs incurred by student catering/bedrooms/JCR from that of the dons' catering/offices/SCR. The provision of parallel services for the two different parties is hopelessly intermixed within the same quadrangles and staircases. Even if the two chunks of space utilisation could be accurately identified and maintenance, cleaning and energy costs properly ascribed to them, the allocation against the student residential account of the huge once-in-a-century costs of releading roofs, refacing stone-work and replacing the means for delivering utilities (new electric wiring or gas pipes) would push up 'economic' rents to well beyond affordable levels.

It is, therefore, a very necessary and an entirely proper use of endowment income under college statutes to maintain buildings. Indeed, according to the New College Statutes, it is even a first charge on such income. 'The college,' certainly what best symbolises it, is more 'the Great Quadrangle' than whatever motley collection of fellows-as-corporators constitute the college-as-corporation at any one time. And the former is certainly more aesthetically appealing! Even the use of endowment capital is lawful under the 1925 Universities and College Estates Act, revised 1964, to maintain, refurbish and alter/extend college buildings, rather than assuming that such costs should be borne from revenue as boosted by higher charges to the students. It is not the students' fault if Oxford colleges have to function within expensive-to-run Listed 'ruins', even if they are attractive to look at (Beadle, 1961). With the will and the money, however, they can be made comfortable to live in.

So, short of the fellows risking a breach of fiduciary duty and even criminal charges by woefully neglecting maintenance of the fabric or by ignoring health and safety (especially fire safety) regulations, most colleges will not be able to match the economy of a large university campus in maintenance costs. Moreover, they cannot spread those costs over a very much larger student population. Hence Oxford colleges will always be expensive to run on a domestic basis and, if the cost is not

to be met by student charges (since they are probably already set according to what the market will bear) nor from taxpayer subsidy of student academic fees since (quite rightly) the HEFCE transfer via the JRAM to colleges is meant only to meet teaching costs, then the deficit will be a call upon the colleges' private endowment income.

There are similar legitimate calls upon that income to cover the cost of conserving historic books, manuscripts, paintings and other treasures in the care of the colleges, assuming, of course, that there are 'specific trust' restraints on such non-income earning assets being sold-off. Moreover, it is legitimate to subsidise the tuition account, again assuming that it is really essential to preserve the intensity of tutorial teaching. The weakest area of expenditure to defend as *essential* rather than *desirable* for collegiality is that devoted to pure commensality. This includes the provision of free lunch/dinner to dons (and indeed any staff on duty), a catering standard usually above the norm elsewhere for students and staff, JCR and SCR butlers, the staff time in running the SCR wine-cellar (even if the dons pay for wines consumed at original purchase price, plus VAT and a reasonable annual mark-up), the funding needed to provide colleges with sports facilities (especially for expensive sports such as rowing), the furnishing and decoration of the SCR and the college's 'grand rooms' to a standard above the drab functionality that seems sufficient for other British quasi-public buildings, the provision of JCR/MCR/SCR Welcome Lunches, Freshers' Dinners, Graduates' Dinners, Schools' (post-exams) Dinners and so on. The cost of such activities amounts to perhaps around 5% of the colleges' total expenditure, or probably less than 10% of the gross endowment income. Such activities constitute only a small part of the overall activities of the colleges and consume only a minor part of their *private* (non-public but charitable) funds.

There will, however, always be critics of collegiality as commensality who will assert that even this relatively minor level of expenditure is a waste of charitable funds (echoing the merciless attacks on the London livery companies in the 1870s and the 1880s – see Palfreyman, 2010, Chap. III). Some would argue that these funds should be diverted to more appropriate purposes, even if college statutes suggest that the Founder intended that his munificence should provide a reasonable standard of living for his perpetual beneficiaries (fellows as well as students). Such critics will always be greatly disturbed by the legal independence and financial autonomy of the *sui generis* Oxbridge colleges and by an autonomy that will last for only so long as colleges are allowed to remain free to manage themselves.

Even if one does not accept that the endowment income of a charitable trust is private income, it is more difficult to argue that those responsible for managing the trust should not determine the ends to which its income is put. And who is to say that the perpetuation of commensality does not serve an important public purpose by helping to maintain the cohesion of an academic community? That said, one might not go as far as the Goldsmiths' Company, when defending livery dining before the 1880 Royal Commission. The defence took a robust and novel line declaring: that these 'entertainments', in fact, 'do real good' in that they are truly 'English institutions', which help to ensure that 'the effect which is produced amongst Englishmen

by difference of opinion, on matters of politics especially, from that which exists in the nations of the Continent, especially in France, may, we think, be traced to a great extent to the habit which Englishmen have of meeting together for purposes of good fellowship and conviviality'(Palfreyman, 2010, Chap. V1)!

Oxbridge: New Labour and the Media

Much of the extra cost of collegiality as costly buildings, or collegiality as diseconomies of scale, or collegiality as labour-intensive tutorial teaching, or collegiality as commensality, is in fact met from endowment income in a classic public–private partnership. However, there once was undeniably also a greater amount of public funding per student per annum going into Oxbridge by way of the college tuition fee than was the norm at other universities, amounting to c£1,900 per student per year on a degree course at Oxford, or c£19m overall in 1998/1999, prior to the start in 1999/2000 of the first year of a phased reduction that has by 2010/2011 led to its abolition. This cut was on top of any general reduction in the purchasing power of the annual settlement for UK higher education as a whole arising from the Treasury's squeeze on the public sector. The unit of resource failed to keep pace with the RPI as universities, like the rest of the public sector generally, were expected to make 'efficiency gains' year on year. In the case of the richer colleges such as New College, this deficit has been covered partly by economies but mainly from increasing endowment income. Also some colleges have managed to increase their conference trade, or find a lucrative niche in taking on USA Junior Year Abroad undergraduates as Visiting Students paying high tuition fees or as Associate Students paying a useful amount to enjoy the college as a social/recreational/sports centre. Almost all have appealed to the generosity of Old Members (alumni) to help out and many have also increased student rents.

The late 1990s loss for the Oxbridge colleges of part of their additional taxpayer funding, taking effect from 1999 to 2000 onwards, was the outcome of a skirmish between the two ancient collegiate universities and the newly elected 1997 Labour Government. The loss would have been greater, or even total (as now, 2010/2011, is indeed the case), but for the astute political lobbying of Oxbridge. There was an eventual recognition that the colleges do indeed have a buildings stock that is not only costly to run and maintain (as similarly conceded by Asquith as long ago as in 1922), but also that they are funding from endowment income many Junior Research Fellowships (posts mainly held by young academics beginning their careers). This was a skirmish extensively covered by the media, where the critics of Oxbridge resurfaced in a series of hostile articles. Simon Jenkins, the noted *Times* columnist, asserted that 'Oxford always hates change. . . They face the imminent withdrawal of their long-standing perk. . .[which] cannot be sustainable in equity. . . They [dons] now find themselves like Trollope's Warden of Hiram's Hospital. They have been rumbled. . . If Oxford and Cambridge want to offer a collegiate, even a tutorial, education they should charge for it and the beneficiaries should pay. . .' (*Times*, 1997, 8 November).

Not surprisingly, the media gleefully reported remarks made by Sir Christopher Ball, former Warden of Keble and Bursar of Lincoln, to the effect that Oxbridge had hoodwinked civil servants during the 1970s and the 1980s to secure excessive annual increases in the college fee: 'It was like taking candy from children... What we did was indefensible in moral terms... corruption... dishonesty... one-to-one tuition cannot be a proper use of public funds...'. Besides quoting Sir Christopher, the *Guardian* (1997, 12 November) could not resist the opportunity to run with a less than favourable Editorial and to let its readers know that Oxbridge, with its *gold-plated spires*, not only wants *to retain the status quo* but also is accused of acting *corruptly* when negotiating its *subsidies*. It would be difficult to imagine a more concerted attempt at negative image construction. However, in spite of the negative press coverage, the continuing public appeal of Oxbridge's affairs is illustrated by the fact that the issue was even graced with a four-hour debate in the House of Lords (Hansard [Lords], 1997, 12 November, p. 583, Cols. 155–212).

This most recent episode in the saga of college fees began with the Report of the Dearing Commission. It recommended that the extra state funding going into Oxbridge should be scrutinised and the question asked as to whether the taxpayer was indeed receiving value-for-money:

> We recommend to the Government that variations in the level of public funding resources for teaching, outside modest margins, should occur only where: there is an approved difference in the provision; and society, through the Secretary of State or his or her agent, concludes, after examining an exceptionally high level of funding, that in relation to other funding needs in higher education, it represents a good use of resources.

The punch line was:

> The college fees in Oxford and Cambridge represent a substantial addition to the standard funding for institutions of higher education. We propose that the Government reviews them against the two principles we have proposed.
>
> (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997, p. 300)

To cut a very long and complex story rather short, the end result in 1998 was that the Oxford 'premium' (Cambridge experienced parallel cuts) would be cut by a third over 10 years (£6.5m in the net £19m for the Oxford colleges, or c0.5% per annum over 10 years on the total public funding of Oxford at £140m by way of HEFCE's block-grant, University fees and college fees). The residue was justified as value-for-money for the taxpayer on the basis of the research contribution of college-employed academic staff and the cost of functioning not only in old buildings but also in small unavoidably inefficient units. This left the colleges to face round two, how to distribute the loss of £6.5 m between the University itself and the colleges collectively. The result of fiendishly complicated algebra was 'the JRAM' as the resources allocation model – and then the constant and elaborate tweaking of it by a 'Monitoring and Moderation Board'!

Round three will be how the rich colleges are to absorb not only their share of the loss but also pay extra college contributions to keep the poor colleges financially afloat, while at the same time addressing the issue of discrepancies in college wealth. As identified by the North Report, rich and poor colleges offer different

remuneration packages to their fellows and provide their students with different levels of support. Its recommendation was that these variations should be narrowed (University of Oxford, 1997a, pp. 231–237). Whether such a redistribution of wealth would serve to strengthen the collegiate system as a whole or to impoverish it generally is highly controversial. It is our contention, as argued earlier, that the overall size of Oxford's collegiate endowment, coupled with the fact that academic fees have been kept artificially low for political reasons, is simply too low to support effectively Oxford's current number of colleges and its student population, so that levelling-down across the colleges is not the answer. In fact in the post-North years not much attention has been paid to the supposed wide variations in student provision across the colleges – let alone over varying remuneration packages for their fellows. That said, the public cuts of 2010/2011–2012/2013 (or even beyond) may, if as deep as some fear for higher education, re-open these long-standing sources of tension and potential conflict.

It was perhaps less the pain of the cash reduction than the fact that the college fee will now be paid directly to the University as part of the HEFCE block-grant, which, as we have stressed, is the greater long-term threat to the collegiate universities in terms of the autonomy of their colleges. College fees will, however, still be charged to all postgraduate students, to overseas students and to British undergraduates who have already had public funding for a first degree. The squabbles that the colleges have had with the University for their share of what is now formally public funding – together with the issues of University governance, undergraduate admissions and academic contracts – placed a sizeable question mark over the continuation of collegiality as colleges and collegiality as commensality – especially in view of the time pressures that now shape the priorities of busy academics. As Simon Jenkins so aptly and bluntly put it: 'the chief threat to the college principle is not fees as such but the reluctance of modern dons to play an active part in college life' (*Times*,1997, 8 November).

And to rub salt into the wounds, not only was the State no longer prepared to pay college fees but it also prevented the colleges from charging their own fees. Anthony Edwards, the long-term participant in and observer of Cambridge's university politics, powerfully summed up the significance of this intrusion: '. . . not only were the Colleges unprepared for the development which some of us had warned about for so long, but they and the University failed to grasp that it was not merely a financial matter but a political, legal, and constitutional one which struck at the very foundations of college existence, of the idea of a collegiate university. On 1998, July 16 the Teaching and Higher Education Act became law, making the Oxbridge Colleges publicly funded institutions and effectively denying these charitable educational corporations the elementary right to charge home students a fee . . . this is nationalisation of the colleges' (Edwards, 1999, p. 8).

Where do we go from here, we then asked as we wrote the 2000 edition of this book. In fact, during the intervening decade between that first edition and this second edition, the colleges' world has not ended – although there have certainly been for Oxford pretty fierce rows between the University itself and the Conference of Colleges over the JRAM numbers, and its tweaking/moderating (with one such row

even leading to threats of writs for defamation!). With further cuts in public funding lying ahead for the next 3–5 years, it seems likely that such squabbles over resources will not go away and may well become increasingly bitter. And British higher education waits anxiously for the Coalition Government's response to the review of higher education by Lord Browne (Browne, 2010).

Barbarians at the Gates

The question, therefore, is still, for this second edition, whether the bell tolls for college autonomy, and a bleak future looms as they become mere halls of residence of either the University of Oxford or Cambridge – albeit as gracious Listed Buildings. Certainly some, insiders as well as outsiders, would shed no tears for the demise of collegiality as colleges and collegiality as commensality. Robert Stevens, Master of Pembroke College, in a controversial Public Lecture at George Washington University, identified the problem, foresaw the demise of collegiality and Oxford's loss of its world-class status and offered privatisation as the solution (Stevens, 1998, March 24). But he was also aware of the British reluctance to rock boats, our failure to act until disaster has struck, and the extent to which the financing of higher education was perceived as an obligation upon the public purse. In his lecture he recalled the reaction to his speech at a City of London Livery Company Dinner: 'For my pains, at the end of the evening I was surrounded by a group of white-tied freemen . . . As their leader put it, didn't I understand, after a chap had paid £12,000 a year to have his son at a good public school for 4 or 5 years, he was entitled to have him educated free at Oxford'. Consequently, Stevens was far from optimistic: 'Oxford will not survive New Labour as a Federal Institution. . . the University [will be] in the driver's seat. . . the College system is on the skids. . . the University will be steering the ship. It is most unclear over what, if anything, the colleges will have control . . . Colleges will not go away physically but they will wither as institutions.' In an amusing, if serious, prediction Stevens foresees his successor's responsibilities as Master of Pembroke to be 'akin to those of the purser in *Love Boat*'; along with his other future college heads he will be an Oxford version of the Parisien *concierge*! In fact the colleges have managed to survive New Labour, but it is not at all clear that post-2010 Coalition Government will provide them with a dramatically more benign environment – other than for the probability that such a Government could be more amenable to doing a deal whereby over 5–10 years Oxford 'went private'.

However, these prophecies of doom have been heard before. There has scarcely been a time when higher education in Britain has not been in crisis. Moreover, the adverse publicity that Oxbridge regularly attracts from certain quarters is within itself a clear indication that the nation at large remains entrapped in the Oxbridge mystique, which – as we have argued – is so entwined in college life. Furthermore, while the international reputations of Oxford and Cambridge may be in jeopardy (although currently their rankings in most of the so-called world-class league tables suggest otherwise), their national reputations remain very high (see the HEPI

Report – Chester & Bekhradnia, 2009 – for Oxbridge's contemporary standing in the United Kingdom). The so-called crisis of collegiality is likely to come across as another example of special pleading when viewed from the perspective of the new universities. Thames Valley University really was in crisis when we wrote the last edition, as is London Met now. Is Stevens' tirade a serious analysis of recent history and a sober prognosis of the future? Or is it a forceful political claim from a former Head of College who recognised only too clearly the precarious financial position of his own college? So, what is the state of play? What is the future?

Chapter 9
The Collegiate University in Retreat?

The Young Man in a Hurry is a narrow-minded and ridiculously youthful prig, who is inexperienced enough to imagine that something might be done before very long, and even to suggest definite things. His most dangerous defect being want of experience, everything should be done to prevent him from taking any part in affairs.

(Cornford,1908)

My prediction is that Oxford will not survive new Labour as a federal institution.

(Stevens,1998)

The Collegiate University Under Pressure

Much of the diagnosis of British higher education, past and present, has made frequent use of cataclysmic language. It is not uncommon to perceive the universities as in a state of crisis from which they will recover only if they succeed in radically reshaping themselves (Moberley, 1949; Scott, 1984). Their values, purposes, procedures and structures – not to mention their personnel – are all too frequently seen as ineffective in the light of prevailing circumstances. They need root and branch reform if they are to survive. Such foreboding has never been more sharply pronounced than in the past 30 years as the established system has found itself ever more tightly controlled by the dictates of successive governments and now about to face significant cuts in funding for teaching as the government attempts to reduce public expenditure.

While the overall expansion of the higher education sector may have defended the pre-1992 universities from having to adjust to hasty growth it is to be expected that, as the most obvious representatives of elite forms of higher education, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge would feel particularly threatened by the broader messages that might accompany mass higher education. Would there be a place for Oxbridge's unique character within the new model? Long before higher education in Britain approached a mass model, unease about its exceptionalism was always to be found in Oxbridge. The pride of belonging to what are widely regarded

T. Tapper, D. Palfreyman, *Oxford, the Collegiate University*, Higher Education Dynamics 34, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0047-5_9,

as world-famous universities was coupled with pangs of guilt. Was the privileged position really merited? Why should collegial control of admissions, the tutorial system, enhanced fee income or even the colleges be allowed to survive within a mass system of higher education? Foreboding has been added to guilt, the unique characters of the collegiate universities can be less objects of pride and more peculiarities in need of an explanation.

And yet, as this book should have amply demonstrated, there is no crisis in the sense that the two ancient collegiate universities have proven impermeable to change. Or to be more precise, the collegial tradition that emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century has shown its capacity to incorporate many new inputs while retaining an image of continuity in values, goals and means. Clearly mid-nineteenth century Oxbridge was in crisis. While internal reform was under way its pace was too slow to satisfy the critics of the day, which would have mattered less if they had lacked the influence to force change. But an increasingly politically empowered bourgeoisie was determined to restrict the prerogatives of the Established Church and to open the resources of the two collegiate universities to wider competition. In the words of Curthoys: 'The failure of internal statute revision, despite Wellington's exhortations, practically sealed the fate of the unreformed colleges, as their defence of chartered rights increasingly bore the appearance of perpetuating an ossified system' (Curthoys, 1997a, p. 173).

The construction of the collegial tradition, a re-invention of Oxbridge's collegial past, comprised the Victorian response to the crisis. Some semblance of a university appeared as the colleges slowly became more serious about the pursuit of educational matters and less embroiled in the affairs of the Established Church. While continuing to welcome the commoner of noble birth, increasingly scholarships and fellowships were opened to those with academic talent rather than particular connections. The collegial tradition created a milieu in which the sons of the aspiring bourgeoisie could at least pretend that they had acquired the qualities of gentlemen. The college tutors were now the guardians of the sons of middle England as well as the backbone of a new professional class.

The extraordinary ability of the collegial tradition to survive is forcefully demonstrated by the vividly contrasting circumstances to which it has adapted over time. It is a tradition that developed in the men's colleges, where all students were undergraduates who invariably had been educated in the public schools while coming predominantly from well-to-do families. They were taught an arts subject (or perhaps mathematics at Cambridge) by bachelor dons who resided in college and were still, more often than not, in Holy Orders. Over time we have moved from colleges for men only, to separate colleges for men and women and to all colleges being mixed. The postgraduate population has expanded rapidly, with some new colleges admitting only graduate students. The students are still predominantly from middle-class families and educated disproportionately in fee-paying schools but the bachelor don resident in college is a rare creature indeed and even less likely to be in Holy Orders. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, there was the incorporation of the sciences – social, natural, applied and medical. The understanding of a liberal education has been reconstituted beyond recognition (Palfreyman, 2008, pp. 9–45).

As our separate chapters have shown, the collegial tradition has been redefined in response to these changing realities. Indeed, if it had not been able to adjust to the new inputs then it would have perished. But adjustment means that the character of collegiality changes over time and judgements have to be made whether matters of substance, rather than mere form, have been lost. Has the fabric of collegiality been so eroded that, while colleges continue to exist, the traditions they represent have been vanquished?

Shifting Character

The ability of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and their colleges to sustain themselves as collegiate universities depends on the maintenance of five preconditions:

1. Collegial institutions are independent corporations governed by their members.
2. They control their membership: who is admitted and how they are admitted.
3. Besides having a physical form they provide a social and cultural setting for their members.
4. Ideally the independence of collegial institutions is guaranteed by the possession of their own financial resources but financial dependence should never constitute a reason for compromising policy decisions.
5. To retain their true identity collegial institutions need to sustain key academic functions, so colleges are still actively engaged in teaching, learning and research.

In all five areas it has been possible to show that a pristine interpretation of the collegial tradition has been tarnished by the realities to which institutions must adjust if they are to survive. And yet it is equally possible to argue that much of the tradition remains intact. College governance still survives but it is conducted within a range of parameters determined by membership of inter-collegiate bodies, links to the University, or negotiations with branches of the state. But the vitality of college governance is threatened as much by internal apathy as by external intrusion. Can the college fellows spare the time for collegial governance? For example, how do college tutors who may also be university lecturers weigh the pressures of the research assessment exercises against the demands of collegiality?

Colleges still retain formal control of undergraduate admissions, and postgraduates even if admitted by the faculties or departments are required to have a college base. Moreover dons are still elected to a fellowship by the existing college fellows. But appearances are deceptive. Neither the Universities of Oxford nor Cambridge can admit as many home-based undergraduates as they may see fit. There are agreements on target numbers by subject (very stringent for certain subjects) to which universities have to conform. And – perhaps most significantly – they cannot determine their fees for UK/EU students, although since the 2004 Higher Education, variable fees of up to a cap of £3,000 per annum can be charged to home-based

and EU undergraduates. But, as we have discussed, college fees for UK/EU undergraduates have been steadily eroded and state resources to cover teaching costs are now channelled through the two Universities. Although postgraduates have a college allegiance, the extent to which the college is little more than a hall of residence or even the occasional port of call to check one's post will vary considerably.

At Cambridge, while the colleges elect their fellows, most of them receive their salaries from the University. For the time being joint appointments continue at Oxford, and while the filling of posts is generally undertaken in a spirit of co-operation between colleges and faculties/departments, the balance of power has moved in the direction of the latter. Certainly it is the University that determines when a jointly funded post can be filled. However, the richer Oxford colleges, in order to keep up their teaching strength, will fill 'frozen' posts entirely at their own expense perhaps for as long as 3 years until the University releases the funds. However, this is an expensive way for the colleges to demonstrate their independence of the University and problematic as to how long it can be sustained.

Even though much of the charm of Cambridge and Oxford has been decimated by urban sprawl, the tourist hordes and the ravages of the automobile, a visit still reveals colleges of great beauty – quadrangles, lawns, gardens, cloisters and graceful buildings. But has commensality survived the changing social lives of the dons and the more fragmented nature of student culture? For the bachelor don, a college resident, the college was his life and he may have been as much concerned with the moral standards and athletic abilities of his undergraduates as their academic progress. It would be interesting to know how many of today's tutors stand on the touchline or towpath or, for that matter, how many of the college's undergraduates are prepared to join him or her. Not very many one suspects. For the married tutor, especially with young children and a working husband or wife, there are unlikely to be too many occasions on which the time for a leisurely college dinner can be spared. And what happens to the construction of college identity amongst the undergraduates when the ruthless and all-consuming pursuit of individual academic success replaces in importance involvement in communal activities such as college sports, regular worship in the college chapel and even daily dining in college? Does a cafeteria service evoke quite the same sentiments as a formal dinner? But it is important not to overstate the case. Many college tutors still appear regularly for lunch. Moreover, the opportunity to shine in college affairs continues to be very appealing to many undergraduates – if nothing else it looks good on the CV!

Even before the extension of the welfare state post-1945, local education authorities were assisting Oxbridge students with the payment of their college fees. Moreover, Oxbridge students received higher maintenance grants than most other British students and were paid on the basis of the 30-week academic year, the norm elsewhere, rather than the 25 weeks they were required to be in residence. If such generosity was not enough, in the 1970s the means-tested payment of college fees ceased and the state assumed the obligation of paying colleges fees in full for all home-based students. Thereafter colleges received a significant percentage of their income from the Exchequer; the precise figure depended on the number of students a college was prepared to admit. For the poorer colleges fee income was a

comparatively easy means of increasing their resources but the price, of course, was a growing financial dependence upon state largesse. Moreover, in recent years the propensity to set increases in fees at, or even below, inflation rates and to regulate the intake of undergraduates – coupled with the assumption that colleges could make efficiency savings – has taken the gloss off this pot of gold. And, of course, the screw has been turned very tight indeed because the resources that the Exchequer now makes available are channelled into the Universities (and not the colleges) via HEFCE. The impact of this development on the federal structures of the two universities is potentially momentous.

Probably the main obstacle to exporting the Oxbridge model of the collegial tradition, or even to reproducing it within the United Kingdom, is the fact that the colleges have continued to retain very important responsibilities for undergraduate teaching. Commensality and elements of self-governance may travel well, but universities have been very reluctant to delegate responsibility for the core teaching function, let alone the resources to underwrite tutorial teaching. Perhaps even more disconcerting would be the prospect of seeing colleges hiring their own faculty and assuming responsibility for the development of academic careers. Inasmuch as college teaching is still an integral part of the experience of most undergraduates then collegiality retains a *unique* meaning at Oxbridge. And this remains true in spite of the fact that the expansion of the sciences has led to the instigation of compulsory lecture series and laboratory work that are controlled by the University.

Although we have shown considerable shifts in the character of the collegial tradition, it is important to stress that the collegial tradition is not simply a myth that finds itself ever more deeply buried by a changing reality. There is enough of the tradition left to suggest that it does not lack substance, that it is more than a myth. So much so that there is a significant body of opinion prepared to defend its merits against those advocates of change who see themselves as dragging the collegiate universities into the twenty-first century. Powerful examples of the continuing reality of the tradition can be drawn across the whole collegial spectrum. Governing Bodies may have delegated most of their powers but both in college and in the University they invariably retain sovereignty. Indeed Oxford's Joint Working Party on Governance that was set up to consider the Report of the North Commission insisted that it is:

> . . . Quite clear that Congregation must remain the University's ultimate sovereign body. It must continue to exercise control over the operation of the central university committees by discussing and voting on issues, at the instigation of the new Council or of groups of individuals; it must elect, directly, a large proportion of the members of Council . . . and it must consider an annual report from Council.
>
> (University of Oxford, 1998, 21 October, p. 179)

Moreover, the overwhelming majority of undergraduate candidates continue to apply to a college of their choice, and it is the college that decides whether or not they will become a junior member of the University. Furthermore, although the faculty input into most academic appointments may have increased at Oxford, and be virtually unquestioned at Cambridge, it is still the colleges that decide who will become a college fellow. The family may have become the centre of social

life for most tutors but the college luncheon remains a well-attended daily ritual, providing an opportunity to meet colleagues informally and to discuss business. These can be both working lunches and informal social occasions. Commensality is not dead.

Although the financial base of many colleges remains fragile, this has to be set within the context of the general impoverishment of British institutions of higher education. How many universities are running deficits? How does the endowment income of Sussex or of Nottingham compare to that of Oxford and Cambridge and their colleges? Compared to Harvard and Yale Oxbridge may be poor but compared to other British universities the protestations of poverty may sound rather hollow. Furthermore, although some of the colleges may be poorly endowed others, as we have shown, can generate considerable endowment income. Trinity College, Cambridge, is clearly in a league of its own but at Oxford All Souls, Christ Church, Nuffield and St. John's all have large resources. The key issue is perhaps less that of collegial poverty and more a question of the undue reliance, especially of the less-well-endowed colleges, upon the state's financial input. But it is important to put even this concern in perspective. Until comparatively recently the state was willing to pay college fees for home-based students, perhaps not as generously as it should have done but certainly without imposing any undue demands upon the colleges. Although the threat was always present, the piper's paymaster has taken a long time to call the tune. The question, of course, is what happens to the collegial tradition now this generosity no longer persists.

Finally, for all the pedagogical impact of the expansion of the sciences, it is remarkable that the colleges have been able to sustain such a significant hold over undergraduate teaching through the tutorial system. Furthermore, tutorials have proved very adaptable. Students can be taught in pairs or small groups and still be deemed to be experiencing tutorial teaching. In the classic model the student read out an essay to the tutor but there is no reason why the session should not be devoted to working through set problems, to covering issues that have arisen in lectures or experiments or even to allow the tutor to make another lecture! The important point seems to be not so much the mode of teaching but the weekly face-to-face contact between tutor and student in an intimate setting for there is no hiding place in a tutorial. Moreover, while the great expansion of research is centred upon the science laboratories, the colleges continue to provide a research base for many arts tutors. For example, college libraries can contain very specialised research material. Colleges also appoint research fellows, provide research allowances and underwrite sabbaticals, thus assisting Oxbridge's overall research output. Finally, if you are as generously endowed as Trinity College, Cambridge, you can even provide substantial support for the creation and endowment of what is essentially a research institute, the Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Sciences, as well as make available generous assistance to poorer colleges. Undoubtedly Trinity College's bounty has enriched Cambridge at large, including its powerful tradition of scientific research.

So any evaluation of the contemporary strength of the collegial tradition at the ancient collegiate universities of Oxford and Cambridge cannot be anything other

than equivocal. The tradition survived only by adapting itself to changing circumstances. Inevitably any dissection would reveal different characteristics from those that prevailed in, for example, Edwardian England. But it is our contention that sufficient qualities persist to illustrate that we are examining the same animal; it is a question of observing an evolutionary process rather than discovering a new species. It is also pertinent to note that the foundation of new colleges has not come to an abrupt end. Quite the contrary, the period since the ending of Second World War has witnessed a remarkable growth of new foundations as well as the steady expansion of existing colleges. If collegiality is in decline, then its death is an exceedingly long time coming.

Finally, there are many analysts of organisational behaviour who would argue that collegial institutions not only operate efficiently but also show a remarkable ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Even if small is not beautiful, it has learnt how to survive. One defence, therefore, of the collegial tradition is not to reflect on past glories but rather to show how it can interact positively with prevailing circumstances to build secure institutional futures while never jumping on bandwagons: continuity with change, change amidst continuity, slowly shifting while seemingly stable.

Pressing Issues: Governance and Finance

In response to what turned out to be an Oxford storm-in-a-teacup the media called for the creation of 'a speedy royal commission on Oxford and Cambridge'(Editorial, 1998, 26 June, p. 13, which was its reaction to Sir Stephen Tumin's departure as Principal from St. Edmund Hall). This is typical of the shallow media hype that even very trivial Oxbridge stories seem to generate. Nonetheless, there are important contemporary issues that have to be resolved. And of even greater significance is how the future role of the collegiate universities within the British system of higher education is to be defined. Is it going to evolve in a manner that recognises their distinctiveness and ensures their reputation as world-class universities? (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2009).

In the wake of Oxford's acceptance of the bulk of the proposals of the Joint Working Party that reviewed the North Commission's recommendations on governance, the formal structures of university governance at Oxford and Cambridge converged. Both Universities have a vice-chancellor who serves an initial 5-year term with the possibility of an extension to a total of 7 years. Each University has a single executive body, a Council with a small number of key committees and with lay representation but not a majority of lay members. At Oxford the North Report proposed that faculties, departments and academic services should be grouped into three super-boards, while the Working Party recommended the four that currently prevail (University of Oxford, 2009, January). Not surprisingly both the proposed conglomerations and their precise powers generated considerable debate in Oxford, which it has to be remembered roundly scotched the suggestion of the Franks Commission that the University should create five faculty groupings.

This administrative structure, roughly parallel at the two Universities, functions in the context of a general assembly of the dons, Congregation at Oxford and the Regent House at Cambridge, which retain formal sovereignty. Each assembly remains the ultimate decision-taking body and, while authority may be delegated, it is not formally ceded. However, just as both the North Commission and the subsequent Joint Working Party recommended further restrictions on the ability of individual members of Congregation to challenge or initiate executive decisions, so very similar moves were proposed at Cambridge. The obvious intention was to ensure that proposed challenges were more widely supported before they could be launched. And at both Universities these intentions have been fulfilled.

If the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge have ended up with similar structures of governance then we are possibly witnessing the concluding stage of a lengthy process of change – at least in terms of how they are governed – within the two collegiate universities. In recent years there has been the appearance of leapfrogging: Cambridge appointed its Bridges Syndicate (University of Cambridge, 1962), Oxford followed with the Franks Commission (1966a), in 1989 Cambridge's Wass Syndicate reported and more recently we have had Oxford's North Commission (1997). Clearly there are still differences in structures, and it would be absurd to rule out future developments, but for the foreseeable future the main principles of university governance appear to be very similar. These can be encapsulated as: key personnel serve longer terms of office, the executive is unified, the administrative structure is hierarchical and co-ordinated and while decision-making may be delegated, including financial responsibility, ultimately authority resides with the centre. If donnish dominion is still a reality it rests on the fact that key executive bodies continue to be composed – in part – of elected members, their councils do not have a majority of lay members and the general assembly of the dons can still reject executive decisions and, within certain limits, even initiate policy.

There are several developments currently afoot in Oxford that may work to undermine further the prevailing federal structures. An important part of Oxford's federalism is the dual contracts that most of its core faculty enjoys (they are employees of both the university and colleges), which adds a tangible dimension to their joint loyalties. And besides considering how the University should be governed, the North Commission devoted one chapter of its Report (Chapter 7: Academic Appointments) to Oxford's joint appointment system. The matter is currently being reviewed by another Working Party and, although the Commission has proposed retaining joint appointments, it wants to replace the current system '... with a new single form of university lectureship under which the appointment of teaching duties, within an overall maximum, would be negotiated between the University and the relevant college(s) on an individual basis at the beginning of the appointment and periodically thereafter' (University of Oxford, 1997a, p. 140). There is a real possibility, therefore, that most new contracts, or renegotiated contracts, could be drawn up in a way that minimises the input of the colleges. It is not difficult to envisage a situation in which the research-active tutors opt for shedding the burdens of repeated tutorial teaching for contracts that make them university lecturers with minimal college teaching obligations. It is not surprising therefore that Alan Ryan,

former Warden of New College, who led the college side of the Working Party is reported to have said: 'Under Sir Peter's [chair of the North Commission] plans, the balance of power swings to the centre. To sort that out will be difficult. Colleges that want decent teachers will not sacrifice control over teaching staff' (Baty, 1999, 29 January, p. 60). But it is germane to wonder why Cambridge can still see itself as a collegiate university with a federal structure, but has been prepared to accept a much sharper distinction between college and university academic posts. Perhaps we have to look at the stronger scientific base of Cambridge driven more by, the contribution of Trinity College notwithstanding, the resources of the University rather than the colleges.

We have already had occasion to reflect on the changing input of the public purse into the payment of college fees. This was income paid into college coffers after face-to-face negotiations to which the Universities were not a party. Furthermore, because the colleges received this income the annual grant from the funding council (currently HEFCE) to the Universities was cut, not to recompense the Exchequer fully for paying college fees but by a substantial figure (approximately 40% of the total college fee income). In effect this was a double loss to the two Universities: they were not a direct party to negotiations that determined a large tranche of incoming state resources and they suffered a diminution in the overall size of their income. On both accounts university interests had good reason to feel aggrieved. Although the public utterances gave the clear impression that Oxbridge was unanimous in its condemnation of the manner in which the state diminished and restructured the payment of college fees, private observations could prove more revealing.

The letters (one to the vice-chancellor of each University and one to the Chairman of HEFCE) announcing the Secretary of State's decision made interesting reading. HEFCE was asked to ensure that its funding arrangements recognised the contribution that the colleges made in supporting research fellows as well as the costs involved in maintaining ancient and listed buildings. Moreover, there was the prospect that the Council would set up a scheme that rewarded quality teaching in higher education from which the colleges could in the future benefit. But it was also made clear that this was money granted to the Universities and they could decide how to distribute it within the guidelines laid down by the funding council.

In resolving the short-term problem of how to handle the reduction in college funding it was scarcely surprising that Oxford and Cambridge moved in different directions. At Cambridge the colleges have borne the brunt of the cuts, whereas at Oxford an agreement was reached that meant the University absorbed half of the cuts for the academic year 1999–2000 (Baty, 1999, 5 March, p. 60; Baty, 1999, 19 March, p. 3), with subsequent settlements subject to negotiation. But as these are resources distributed at the discretion of the Universities future arrangements can be varied in the light of changing circumstances. The University of Oxford's decision reflected in part a different tradition of federalism incorporating the very practical consideration that its colleges are responsible for a higher percentage of the overall faculty salary bill and of the undergraduate teaching. It is pertinent, however, to note that the future of joint contracts at Oxford will be resolved in a context within which the income of many colleges may well be in decline, and thus they may

simply lack the resources to strike an effective bargain with the university. In that context perhaps the federal systems of governance, like the structures of university administration, could also converge at Oxford and Cambridge.

Key Long-Term Considerations: Sustaining Academic Functions, Inter-collegiality and the Role of the College Tutor

Academic Functions

Reforms to the pattern of governance and variations in the flows of financial support are indicative of the fact that the collegiate universities are under pressure to change. While the difficulties that flow from such developments have to be addressed, for the long-term future of the collegiate universities the key issue is how change will impact upon the universities as federal institutions in which historically the performance of core functions has been shared between the universities and their colleges. What is needed, therefore, is a deeper understanding of the relationship between collegiality and federalism. If variations in the control of financial resources and in the distribution of formal authority radically alter the balance of power between the university and the colleges with respect to their shared responsibilities then the structure of the collegiate university, as well as the collegial tradition it embraces, is in jeopardy.

In his review of Duke's *Importing Oxbridge: English Residential Colleges and American Universities* Alan Ryan has written:

> So long as there are institutions which, like Oxford and Cambridge, Yale, Harvard and Princeton and a very few others, try to reconcile the inevitable tension between undergraduate and graduate teaching, and liberal education and technical research, there will be an argument about what institutional arrangements can best shelter those ambitions. The collegiate university is one answer to that problem.
>
> (Ryan, 1997, December 12, p. 27)

But within the collegiate university what is to be the balance of responsibility between university and colleges in terms of the performance of those key functions? And to whom are those who perform those functions to be responsible? Is there an implicit assumption that a federal system requires functions to be shared between university and college as widely as possible and that tutors should have both a college and university base?

At both Oxford and Cambridge, although there may be imbalances in their respective responsibilities, the universities and the colleges are engaged in pursuing the central purposes of higher education. Moreover, at both universities there is an expectation that the core academic faculty should wear both a university and a college hat, although this is an issue that has caused considerable angst from time to time (University of Cambridge, 1962, March 13; Brock, 1994, pp. 742–744). Moreover, a key difference between the two English collegiate universities is that at

Cambridge the bulk of the tenured faculty are first and foremost university employees whereas currently at Oxford most of them have joint university and college contracts. In other words, the two hats are worn in different ways. Are there substantive arguments as to why it would be a significant breach of the principle of federalism, as opposed to a significant breach of the way Oxford has ordered its affairs in the past, if Oxford were to move in Cambridge's direction?

One of the more interesting sections of the North Commission's Report discusses the emergence of joint contracts at Oxford (University of Oxford, 1997a, pp. 135–136). It is evident that over time the salaries of many tutors, at one time funded by a combination of the resources of their own colleges and a common college fund, were increasingly underwritten in part by the university whose finances post-1945 were buoyed by an expanding UGC block grant. As the Report observes:

> In the 1950s however, the University Grants Committee (UGC) began to promote and fund nationwide increases in academic salaries which even the wealthier colleges could not meet. Consequently the University itself funded the salary increases for CUF lecturers by applying some of its additional funding from the UGC to this purpose. From this beginning the situation gradually came about that the salaries of all established college teaching fellows were funded jointly by their college and the University . . .
>
> (University of Oxford, 1997a, p. 136)

Of course circumstances change and others will point to the fact that since the decline in the university's UGC block grant from the early 1980s the colleges have paid a higher percentage of the overall salary bill. Furthermore, they provide office space, seminar rooms and lecture theatres to support teaching albeit mainly in the arts and social studies. But the implications of any shift in the balance of power between the university and the colleges should not be underestimated. To increase the authority of the university has resulted in greater faculty influence over admissions (at Oxford by defining what standard offers should be made to applicants) and pedagogy (at Cambridge by offering lecture series that relate closely to the sequence of college tutorials).

Ryan's review of Duke's *Importing Oxbridge* (1997) asserted that the collegial model was a possible means of enabling great universities to pursue the twin goals of high-quality undergraduate education and world-class research. This may indeed be true but how that is put into effect may require a major adjustment in our understanding of the collegial tradition. The contemporary pressures within the academic profession are such that one of those goals, taking responsibility for undergraduate education, has become increasingly devalued. As one of our interviewees wryly observed there are few universities competing to be world-class undergraduate teaching universities. Even if should this remain a formal institutional goal most academics, certainly at the leading universities, know that professional status – including promotion – is overwhelmingly dependent upon their publication records, with teaching quality very much a secondary consideration.

In his study of the nineteenth century transformation of Oxford, Engel (1983) argued that it was important for the college tutors to establish themselves as men of scholarship rather than as mere tuners of young minds. Teaching could be a drudge as well as a delight. It is undoubtedly true that when the collegiate universities were

devoted primarily to the study of mathematics and arts subjects (especially the classics) then it was far easier for the colleges to support research than it is today. In effect the search for new knowledge meant a broad-based commitment to scholarship rather than the specialisation implied by research, and dons were men of letters writing for an educated public at large rather than specialists writing for professional journals or delivering conference papers. However, there is a great deal of evidence to show that the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge have made the transition from scholarship to research. The bulk of their faculty has moved from a model of the tutor as an intelligent and perceptive generalist to a sophisticated and highly regarded specialist. Furthermore, the research assessment exercises have demonstrated the wide quality of the research base at Oxbridge, and the bulk of research funding in British higher education has been focussed upon a limited number of universities, amongst which Oxbridge figures very prominently. While there may be debates about Oxford's ranking in the world's research league, there is little doubt that most of its departments and faculties are in Britain's top flight.

But what is more problematic is the role that the college has played in this transition. Clearly the college is still a research base for some faculty in the arts and social sciences but the big research explosion in the sciences, notwithstanding the input of Cambridge's Trinity College, has witnessed only a marginal direct college input. There are collegial myths that several great inter-disciplinary research advances in science were set in motion by conversations over college dinners or lunches, but one suspects that the weather is likely to be the most frequently discussed topic at high table. While Oxbridge could probably thrive, on the basis of fees and endowments, as liberal arts universities offering only undergraduate degrees, the science research base cannot survive without substantial inputs from the state and increasingly from industry. The colleges may support research, by appointing junior research fellows, paying for sabbaticals and augmenting salaries but the infrastructure that research requires – laboratories, sophisticated computing facilities, specialised library resources and even highly – if narrowly – trained support personnel – will be in the gift of the universities rather than the colleges. Furthermore, while there may be vehement defences of the symbiotic relationship between research and teaching from eminent scholars, there is also a strong undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the burdens of teaching (University of Oxford, 1997b, pp. 471–472). And in particular it is the demands of repeated tutorial teaching that draw most negative comment. Has a fault line developed in the academic career profile? If so, does the collegial tradition, rather than reinforcing one's status as an academic, become a burden – something to escape rather than to embrace?

It is important to consider how the federal structure relates to the twin goals of research and teaching. Historically these were entwined both ideologically and in practice. On the one hand was the powerful belief that research and teaching were two inseparable halves of an academic life. Consequently, most researchers were also teachers, although the converse was less true. The North Report informs us that in the 1990s there were within Oxford some 3,000 individuals engaged in teaching and/or research. Of these approximately 1,000 individuals who were employed by the departments and/or faculties had predominantly short-term contracts and were

hired mainly for the performance or support of research activities. Conversely, there were also approximately another thousand individuals employed by the colleges, again often on a short-term basis, to undertake teaching duties and, although they may have been research active, this was not the reason why the colleges hired them (University of Oxford, 1997b, p. 444). Within the federal model, therefore, there is a growing bifurcation of institutional roles. The colleges are predominantly teaching institutions and it is within the colleges that the undergraduates apparently develop so many of those qualities that embellish a curriculum vita. Increasingly, it is the university that extends the frontiers of research, and so there is the potential for institutional as well as career bifurcation.

Inter-collegiality

Although we have not concurred with his argument, in the chapter on the governance of Oxford we referred to Halsey's claim that, although change was afoot, collegial interests still dominated those of the wider university. However, what we may be witnessing is the emergence in Oxford of a more genuine federal structure, one in which the two centres of power, the University and the colleges, are bound together in the performance of the same functions but, equally, have a considerable measure of independence from one another. Cambridge has had a stronger centre than Oxford, and those who participate in its university politics are less beholden to their colleges, so their participation is likely to be somewhat freer of collegial ties. Interestingly, it does not follow that the Cambridge colleges are more likely to be creatures of the University. In fact they may act independently, guided firmly by how they interpret their own individual interests. Certainly the comparative evidence on undergraduate admissions policies would lend support to this interpretation. While Oxford has had its maverick admissions tutors the Cambridge colleges have been much more willing to operate special schemes without the apparent disapproval of other colleges or of the University. For example, in the late 1990s King's College Cambridge received considerable publicity because of the special drive it mounted to secure more applications from state school pupils and other social groups who were historically underrepresented at the university.

It is interesting therefore to think of a federal model of governance, which divides responsibility for different functions between the centre and periphery and yet permits considerable discretion to each of them within their respective spheres of influence. But, of course, in the collegiate universities most functions are shared and not neatly divided and, almost as a defence mechanism against external criticism, the standardisation of practices has become more common. For example, the response to the Government's widening participation has been to move beyond initiatives undertaken by the individual colleges and orchestrate action through intercollegiate/university co-operation.

The government's decision to reduce its financial input into Oxbridge by phasing out its direct payment of college fees not only has significant ramifications for the long-term structure of federalism within the collegiate model of the university

but also raises important questions for inter-collegiate co-operation. The abolition of college fees posed the greatest financial threat to those colleges with the smallest endowment incomes. The current arrangement whereby the incomes of the richer colleges are taxed to provide resources for the poorer colleges is a step in mitigating the wealth differentials. However, as made clear in a speech by Robert Stevens (at the time Master of Pembroke College), there are many within the poorer colleges who can scarcely conceal their envy of the wealthier colleges (Stevens, 1998, 24 March). The redistribution of endowment wealth is an issue that re-appears with monotonous regularity, so it is scarcely surprising that it should have been raised again as college fee income was eroded in the 1990s. The arguments for and against the pooling of endowment income are well rehearsed but of equal interest is its significance for interpreting the idea of collegiality. If the resources and authority of the University are augmented at Oxford, will the colleges need to show a united front in order to protect their interests more effectively? Would the pooling of endowment income and its redistribution by an agreed formula help to create a more coherent collegial alliance? Or would it simply mean that the University is in a stronger position because there are no really powerful colleges to counter its interests?

A move towards pooling endowment income would be a significant step towards interpreting collegiality as a system in which the individual colleges forsook their own interests and identity in favour of the perceived greater good. In the alternative model the colleges are independent corporate bodies governed by statutes that require the governing fellows to protect above all the long-term interests of the college, including the preservation of its wealth as permanent endowment. This interpretation views the college as a charitable corporation and the fellows are its trustees (for refinements, see Palfreyman, 1996, 1998, 1999b). Past concessions could be interpreted as essentially political gestures that mollified the poorer colleges without substantially eroding the wealth of the richer colleges. Will the future be any different?

Perhaps more dramatic concessions are required of the wealthier colleges to alleviate the threat to the wider collegial system. Various pressures (the North Report, the decline in the value of the college fee and the creation of the joint resource allocation mechanism to distribute core public funding between the colleges and the university) have led to a restructuring of the college contribution scheme so that the colleges with larger endowment incomes are now taxed at a higher rate to make more resources available to the less-well-endowed colleges. But to take this further by pooling endowment income, or even capital, would be a high-risk strategy to pursue. Indeed, it would generate bitter conflicts within and across colleges including the possibility of fellows and colleges turning to the law courts – to discover, for example whether endowment income and capital can be legally pooled. And, while the losses could be calculated precisely, the alleged benefits would be more intangible. And it should not be forgotten that Cambridge appears to offer a viable alternative model of collegiality – a more powerful university interacting with, rather than being entwined by, independent colleges that have their own endowment capital and control the income it generates.

A potentially more viable strategy for the richer Oxford colleges would be to accept the emergence of a more powerful University presence but then use their resources to further their own particular interests and individual collegial identities. This may weaken the collegial system as a whole but the risk of a united college front, cemented by major changes in the control and distribution of endowment capital and income, could undermine the independence of the richer college individually without guaranteeing a stronger general collegial voice in negotiations with the University. For example, college fellows may well come to the conclusion that their own college had less to offer them than it did in the past and that the tide is with the University. If this were to be the scenario then it is obvious in which direction power would flow. Furthermore, as suggested earlier, the overall capital assets of Oxford may not be large enough to sustain the current range of colleges and the rational solution might be a smaller University with fewer but more financially sound colleges.

The Role and Status of the College Tutor

But within this changing context what is to be the role of the college tutor? As the nineteenth century unfolded an Oxbridge-educated graduate found a labour market niche that ensured the appeal of the collegiate universities to a significant segment of British society. That which secured, or even elevated, the bourgeois status of the undergraduates also enhanced the appeal of an Oxbridge education. The college teaching fellows became the dominant force in the affairs of the college, which was no longer a temporary refuge for those waiting for a church living but the base upon which a new professional career – as tutors and scholars – could be constructed. The collegial tradition had linked the interests of the tutors to undergraduate teaching and once more Oxford and Cambridge became vibrant centres of learning. They had escaped the stupor into which they had descended in the eighteenth century.

It is still realistic to claim that there is privileged labour market access for graduates from a limited number of universities including Oxford and Cambridge (Brown & Scase, 1994; Windolf, 1988). What is particularly important for the Oxbridge colleges is to sustain the idea that it is the broadly defined collegial experience that makes their graduates such attractive labour market recruits. In this context small-group teaching, even the tutorial, may continue to have its appeal. And certainly a wide involvement in college affairs should add to the undergraduate's marketability. But even in the nineteenth century it was important for college fellows to be regarded as scholars rather than as mere teaching drudges. And, not surprisingly, in view of the changes in academic culture, today's college fellow has to be fully engaged in research. The issue, then, is whether the college is viewed as enhancing or obstructing the individual tutor's research role. Thus, while the perpetuation of the collegiate university is dependent on the colleges continuing to perform critical academic functions, the colleges will become essentially marginalised institutions if they are increasingly associated with the fulfilment of tasks that are steadily in

decline within the academic value structure. Either this reality has to be accepted or there needs to be an effective move to reshape the values that underwrite an academic career. In the disaster scenario the college tutor becomes a mere cog in the process by which upmarket recruits for the labour market are trained and the students acquire an education merely for the purposes of securing a favourable niche in that labour market.

Part of the collegial tradition is that within the community of scholars there is a rude equality in which differences of status and income are downplayed, and hence the traditional collegial dislike of academic titles (there has always been a deep suspicion of professors amongst college tutors). What counts is the individual's contribution to teaching and scholarship and not the title. Partly because of external pressure (a government threat to withhold the resources to underwrite an agreed pay increase) both Oxford and Cambridge now make what can best be described as 'bonus payments' to individuals who have made contributions that are deemed to be especially meritorious. Not surprisingly, the payments seem to go disproportionately to those who are already academically prestigious and generously rewarded. The status and incomes of the most privileged are enhanced (perhaps deservedly so), thus further undermining the tradition of collegial equality. Moreover, we have witnessed the decision to increase en masse the number of professors (and some lesser titles) at both Universities.

Unsurprisingly, these developments have not occurred without generating considerable friction. There is principled objection: the values of the collegial tradition are being undermined by an increasingly explicit emphasis upon the importance of academic titles and differentiation of academic salary scales. Such developments crudely undermine the tradition of an academic community committed to work collegially for the advancement of teaching, learning and scholarship. Then there are the inevitable practical problems. What procedures should be established to determine who is deserving of merit pay and promotion? Are they fair? Should the procedures permit individuals to make their own claims? Is there going to be an appeals process for those who feel they have been unfairly treated? The pitfalls are numerous and, as to be expected, a great deal of acrimony has been stimulated. At Cambridge for a period of time the proceedings of the Regent House seemingly reverberated with little else. Moreover, Cambridge's procedures have even been subjected to the scrutiny of the courts (Evans, 1999a, pp. 184–190; *R. v. University of Cambridge, ex parte Evans* [1998] Education Case Reports, 1, pp. 151–164), thanks to the efforts of one of its more aggrieved members – so much for the spirit of collegiality.

In recent years, therefore, there has been considerable pressure upon both the public financing of the collegiate universities and their structures of governance, with much of this pressure exerted by the state. These developments impact upon the long-term functioning of the collegiate universities. Can they, in the broadest sense, sustain a meaningful federal model of the university? Can college tutors, collegial interests, inter-collegiate bodies and the universities coalesce to ensure the smooth functioning of institutions that – in terms of both undergraduate teaching and research output – see themselves as world-class? Or, is the model increasingly

imbalanced as the collegiate universities shed in piecemeal fashion their collegial traditions to embrace futures as increasingly centrally managed institutions?

Conclusion: The Collegiate University and the Collegial Tradition

In our postscript we will present different scenarios on the future of Oxford as a collegiate university. This conclusion, however, provides a broader overview of the idea of collegiality within which these more precise perspectives can be placed, and draws upon the comparative study of collegiality that we presented in *The Collegial Tradition in the Age of Mass Higher Education* (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010) to provide the framework.

In the Dearing Report we read:

> We support the existing diversity between institutions, believing it to be a considerable strength in responding to the diverse needs of students as participation in higher education widens. We recommend that funding arrangements should reflect and support such diversity.
> (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education [Summary Report] 1997, p. 26)

Significantly, the recommendation for diversity is made on the grounds of responding to 'the diverse needs of students as participation in higher education widens.' It is not made on the grounds of protecting a rich British heritage of higher education or as a reflective analytical response that institutional diversity is perhaps a meaningful way of embracing the arrival of mass higher education. Indeed, the Dearing Report can be seen as yet another step in the long march to envelop the British system of higher education in a blanket of dull mediocrity driven by the bureaucratic underpinnings of the state.

Notwithstanding the standardising impact of the state's influence over British higher education, what is likely to emerge over time is both increasing differentiation within mass systems of higher education and within those elite institutions that in the past have attempted to combine high-quality undergraduate education with advanced research through the federal structures of a collegiate university. There is going to be greater salary differentials, an even wider proliferation of academic titles, more variations between (and variety within) academic careers and considerable institutional variations (undergraduate colleges, postgraduate colleges, colleges with specialised academic interests, research institutes, policy centres and consultancy agencies) both within and between universities. What this means is that the contrasting traditions and interests within those universities that wish to claim excellence on a number of fronts will need to learn how to accommodate one another. While this will undoubtedly cause considerable friction – at the moment we are in a transition phase and tension is therefore high – it will also resolve other issues. For example, it has been argued from time to time that both Oxford and Cambridge should forsake undergraduate education and focus upon maintaining themselves as research universities with a world-class status. Anyone with the slightest knowledge of the two universities knows the improbability of this suggestion. But if part

of the definition of the modern university is its ability to incorporate different traditions then the proposal is not so much absurd as irrelevant. The two traditions are parallel, arguably interacting streams within a more loosely defined whole.

If the contemporary university is multi-purpose in its character then it may require a complex federal structure of governance, one that recognises a diversity of interests beyond the simple division of university and colleges. To give an obvious example, do the graduate colleges have similar interests to the predominantly undergraduate colleges? What about those departments that have no undergraduate degree courses or those institutes that have no students, neither graduates nor undergraduates? Are they to be given recognition independent of the large, predominantly undergraduate, departments or faculties within the federal model?

If it may be necessary to reconstitute federalism, then equally it has to be recognised that, while the collegial tradition survives within this increasingly fragmented environment, it has to fight its corner in a more competitive and hostile environment. It cannot be assumed that its central values are widely shared; support will be given pragmatically rather than unquestioningly. But many colleges do have the resources to build such support – allegiances can be based on pragmatic interests. In this context the colleges have to define their central purposes. If tutorial teaching is a critical part of the collegial tradition then why not sustain it by financing it as generously as income allows. If commensality is considered to be important, then endow it in a manner that enhances its attractions. If it is vital that fellows sit on college committees and hold college posts, then make it a formal part of the obligations of being a fellow that they should do so and sweeten the pill with more generous allowances. There are few people who cannot be brought, even high-minded dons. Why should it be more valued to research rather than to teach? Why is it more meaningful to seek out an esoteric reference than to chair a college committee? Is it any less prestigious to be a tutor and fellow of a major college that pays your salary than to be a lecturer supported by a university, whether it be either Oxford or Cambridge?

In the past the collegial tradition survived by attempting to embrace broader developments within higher education. For example, colleges built and ran science laboratories, postgraduates were required to have a college base and it was argued that the core faculty should wear the two hats. But we have reached the point at which so many compromises have been made that the collegial tradition is stretched to breaking point, in danger of losing all semblance of a core meaning. The core values need to be defined and the means of sustaining them provided. If there should be colleges that lack the ability to do this effectively then perhaps they should merge with others, or indeed become halls of residence. There is no logical reason why there should not be a non-collegial as well as a collegial tradition of undergraduate education at Oxbridge. Perhaps the collegial tradition needs to retreat to its well-funded heartland in order to survive and remain the most important – but by no means the only – defining feature of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. However, it is important to stress that the defence of collegiality cannot depend only upon what happens at Oxford and Cambridge or be comprised of a strategy that is dependent solely upon defence and retreat.

A key component of the collegial tradition is that the academic mission of higher education institutions needs to be controlled by those responsible for its delivery and quality. This is integral to both the definition of higher education and the idea of a university. If this is so, then it constitutes a bottom line that cannot be compromised at any institution, which considers itself to be a university, whether this be in terms of teaching or research. Moreover, although the practices of collegiality may have been threatened severely in recent years, there is also evidence to show that within the core arenas of teaching and research it continues to hold firm.

Several of the scientists we interviewed claimed that there was as much *intellectual collegiality*, if not more, within their departments and laboratories as within their colleges. They argued that neither teaching nor research could be conducted effectively unless it was organised collegially. The nature of the academic exercise is such that it can be pursued robustly only if it proceeds on the basis of an agreed division of labour. Individuals may not all be equal but they all have an essential input to make if the overall project is to succeed. In this sense collegiality is team work that functions best if individuals act collegially to construct an agreed consensus as to what needs to be done and how it should be done, as opposed to working through a line management structure to implement imposed ends and means. Presumably this holds good for teaching and research within all higher education institutions, even those that have hierarchical structures of governance and line management. Thus it is possible to conceive of outposts of collegial governance within HEIs that at the centre formally embrace a very different tradition.

There is a considerable body of evidence to show that policy control within British universities is steered increasingly from the centre – invariably a comparatively small group of senior managers acting in conjunction with the titular head who is responsible for the daily functioning of the institution. In stark terms this can be expressed as the dominance of a managerial ethos over collegiality, but it is equally evident that this model can function in different ways. Moreover, thanks to the research of Burton Clark, in recent years the so-called entrepreneurial university has been the subject of some considerable attention. As with the centrally managed university, the entrepreneurial university can embrace different cultures of governance and administration. The key consideration is what part the institutional periphery plays in the process of decision-making. Is the goal to re-energise the periphery through a process that delegates decision-making responsibility (and thus, so it could be argued, is collegial in nature) or to dictate to the periphery what the centre believes is the best pattern of development (and thus, is the antithesis of collegiality)?

Clark interpreted his research findings to argue that each of the five universities he researched in his 1998 study, *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities*, had created an entrepreneurial culture that was now sufficiently deep-seated to enable them to adjust flexibly to the pressures for change. They no longer required the occasional set-piece commissions that appear to be necessary before Oxbridge can introduce reforms: change is part of the enterprise. But it is a culture that should recognise the need to resist as well as respond to demands, that there are values worth defending. Within this process of change, ‘collegiality is then put to work in a different way’,

and rather than acting as a defence of the status quo it enables institutions to make hard choices in which '. . . collegiality then looks to the future. It becomes biased in favour of change' (Clark, 1998, p. 148). Clark's research suggests an agenda that the proponents of collegiality could embrace and one of our interviewees made a very similar observation with respect to Oxford – in the past its collegiality had looked inwards, it now needed to look outwards.

In a reflective article on Cambridge's structure of governance, G.R. Evans urged her university to consider moving in a parallel direction: 'In our structures we have – and for our own protection ought to have – no individual decision-makers but a truly collegial shared decision-making into which we might consider allowing our senior administrators as full participants' (Evans, 1999a, p. 7). The key issue is what a great university must do to reinforce its tradition of collegial governance. And perhaps, as Evans suggests, one way forward is to accept the fact that while not all believers are priests 'all believers share a common priesthood' and to arrange the conduct of your affairs as if that were so. Ironically, it may well be that the increasingly fractured academic profession has less reason to act collegially than the senior administrators. Moreover, academics may have more commitment to their discipline and less to their institutional base. If so, institutional survival at large may depend on a collegiate culture that takes root amongst administrators. As the officials are incorporated so the dons take their leave!

A final thought should be reserved for the new (post-1992) universities. Although never collegially governed, the polytechnics incorporated stronger elements of academic representation within their structures of governance as the embrace of the local authorities was loosened. Furthermore, there is some evidence to suggest that as so-called new universities, they have become more autonomous institutions but still incorporate a top-down style of leadership and management – with predominant lay membership of their governing councils (Warren, 1997, p. 82). Given this heritage, and add to it the various pressures that are fragmenting the collegial tradition, it follows that collegiality is less likely to establish and sustain a hold in those institutions where traditionally it lacked any substantial depth. But, of course, there was never any pretension that the new universities would be collegiate universities. However, this is not to deny that they also embrace critical aspects of the broader collegial tradition, including grassroots academic responsibility for teaching and research. If the idea of collegiality can be said to be a characteristic of British higher education we need therefore to explore its presence within its largest institutional layer.

Postscript: What Future for the Collegiate University?

The University of Oxford has been in the throes of redefining its understanding of collegiality. There are a number of possible scenarios that could eventually emerge. In this short postscript we want to present four possible outcomes and offer our own prognosis. Undoubtedly, others will interpret the evidence differently and come up with contrasting scenarios. This postscript therefore presents a challenge to those who are interested in understanding the future trajectory of Oxford and its position within the evolving system of British higher education.

In contrast to Kenny and Kenny's *Can Oxford be improved?* (2007), we are too cautious to offer a reform agenda, although our caution also reflects the fact that we have written a different kind of 'Oxford' book. We have been more concerned to describe and understand the process of change within contemporary Oxford with particular reference to its collegial tradition. The future of reform within Oxford will be determined by the actions of its internal interests as they come to terms with the external pressures generated by state and society. At best our input into this process could only be marginal, at worst little more than pretentious.

Within a generation, say by 2035, will we have seen the death of the collegiate tradition in its Oxford heartland? While, as we have argued consistently throughout this book, collegiality is intrinsic to the process of higher education, what happens at Oxford is inevitably going to influence how we interpret the collegial tradition in the future. But there is a wider lesson to be learnt. Oxford is one of those universities priding itself on its ability to sustain high-quality undergraduate teaching whilst generating a broadly based research culture that has a worldwide reputation. Several scholars have argued that collegiality, and more particularly the federal principle it embodies, has been critical in enabling Oxford to achieve these exalted twin goals. Can any university in the future hope to pursue both purposes, and if so, will the federal principle continue to be the means of achieving their reconciliation?

Scenario 1 points to a University in which very little has changed, there may be reforms but these are essentially window-dressing that deceives no one. It is tempting to allude to the rearranging of the deck chairs on the Titanic: the reconfiguration of the labyrinth of university committees but no real change in organisational culture. It is possible that this will be the eventual outcome of the post-North Report reform process, but there are a number of indicators to suggest otherwise. The

T. Tapper, D. Palfreyman, *Oxford, the Collegiate University*, Higher Education Dynamics 34, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0047-5,

Second Report of the Joint Working Party on Governance insisted that '... there is a very large degree of support for the general model it suggested. Virtually all of those consulted welcomed the report [its first report], and many regarded it as a significant improvement on the Report of the Commission of Inquiry' (University of Oxford, 1999, March 24, p. 1). While this may be putting an optimistic gloss on the picture, it also suggested a strong momentum for change.

Thus there has emerged a new 7-year term of office for the vice-chancellor (an initial appointment for 5 years, which may be extended for a further 2 years), a co-ordinated administrative structure under the control of Council, the implementation of Divisional Boards (super-boards) for the organisation of the faculties and a Congregation that, although formally retaining its sovereignty, is more constrained in its ability to exercise it. How many tutors decide to retain the contracts that tie them into college teaching remains to be seen but the contractual relationship that links tutors, colleges and university is undoubtedly in the process of changing. And it is that contractual relationship that has coloured so markedly the character of Oxford's federalism. And all this is taking place in a context in which, although there may be widespread suspicion of both centralised decision-making and the long-term of ambitions of the senior officials, the individual academics are rarely moved to exercise en masse their democratic rights. The scotching of John Hood's plans (the then vice-chancellor) to secure majority lay representation on Council could prove to be but a small hiccup on the way to the promised land of centralised policy control and administrative dominance. The cumulative effects of long-term formal institutional change, coupled with the steady reformulation of the academic career structure, are pressures that are too potent not to have an impact but this is an essentially quiet and subtle process of development.

Scenario 2 points to the steady convergence of the Oxford and Cambridge models of collegiality, with the former moving towards the latter. The reforms of the North Commission, as reshaped by working parties, have led to this growing convergence. Both Universities operate a federal model of governance with relatively strong centres and, where the interests of the centre (the University) and periphery (the colleges) overlap, it is the former that has gained power. Nonetheless, the colleges will remain self-governing institutions, continue to control their endowment incomes, still organise some of the undergraduate teaching and operate their own admissions procedures (albeit henceforth more receptive to the interests of the University).However, while colleges would continue to elect their own fellows, many would be first and foremost University employees who have acquired a college base because it conveys both prestige and tangible rewards. There is no reason to suspect that college loyalty is weaker at Cambridge but it has a different basis. At Oxford being a college fellow is central to the identity of many of its dons. At Cambridge this is less true; its tutors are mainly university employees who negotiate a mutually convenient relationship to the colleges. And Oxford has moved, and will continue to move, towards Cambridge.

For many critics, Oxford's move towards Cambridge's collegiate model is not before time. In recent years Oxford, relative to Cambridge, has had a negative press. An edition of the *Times* (1999, August 16) illustrates the point perfectly and we

find highlighted: 'Unwieldy Oxford regime blamed for setbacks', 'Cambridge acts faster', 'Employers give Oxford the blues' and the front-page headline, 'Thatcher takes revenge on Oxford'! And even the robust response, of Oxford's then vice-chancellor, Colin Lucas, conveyed the impression of the University's 'management' intervening decisively to counter negative media images – and in the depths of August no less! (*Times*, 1999, 19 August).

But it would be absurd to pose a static Cambridge pulling in its wake a reluctant Oxford. The essence is that higher education is increasingly perceived as an economic resource centred around the production of intellectual capital and the polishing of recruits for the labour market, both functions that are firmly directed by state intervention with much support from powerful interests embedded in society. So Cambridge is changing as Oxford is changing and both are pressurised by the same forces. Indeed, there are those bold enough to argue that the most desirable future for the British system of higher education is to follow 'the American way' by accepting differential tuition fees, encouraging a mixture of public and private funding, and recognising that functions and standards will vary (even sharply) from institution to institution (Ryan, 1999, pp. 24–28).

Within this context it is possible to envisage a third scenario, the University attempts to capitalise on two brand images: the prestigious liberal arts college running in parallel with the equally prestigious research university. This model presupposes separate teaching and research career lines for academics, a more sophisticated financial structure with a sharper divide between the two 'businesses' so that one does not unwittingly subsidise the other. Moreover, if the colleges were permitted to charge top-up fees (over and above the University's fee) then – depending upon how the resources were employed – there is no reason why the financial rewards of a teaching career should be any less than those of a research career. The colleges would have the resources to ensure that their tutors were generously rewarded. Besides reducing the pressure upon individual academics to undertake both teaching and research, it would also end the squabbling over who subsidises whom or what subsidies what. Within this model individual roles can be negotiated and, as the North Commission proposed, contracts would be drawn up to suit personal circumstances. It is important for the individual tutor to perceive institutional demands as of critical importance for the development of his/her future career, rather than acting as a barrier that continuously constrains one's potential.

The clearer separation of academic roles with different institutional settings would necessitate the provision of adequate support facilities within each environment. If parts of the University are going to move out of Oxford (perhaps segments of both Oxford and Cambridge will meet at Bedford!), which is entirely possible in this scenario, then they will need their own infrastructures to facilitate academic progress. Within this model collegiality could take different forms in different parts of the University, coming closest to its historical interpretation within the traditional college setting. What is important is the acceptance of the inevitability of change; to build into collegiality the idea that it needs to adjust in order to survive. So change becomes an integral ingredient of collegiality, as opposed to something that seemingly has to be resisted until forced upon a sceptical academic community. The set

piece 'confrontations' of commissions of inquiry or syndicates (to use Cambridge's term) should give way to a process of governance that can define what it is vital to preserve while accommodating new circumstances.

In the fourth scenario collegiality descends into a rapid decline. Whilst decision-making in the University becomes more centralised, guided by a bureaucratic imperative that in turn is driven by the demands of the state and the market, so the colleges steadily fall into disrepair. College fees are a declining resource and the University uses its financial control to pursue its own policy ends. Teaching is increasingly under-valued and academics centre their working lives upon the production of research, much of it confined within a narrow disciplinary horizon. Institutional loyalty is eroded undermining not only involvement in college governance but also in university governance, including departmental and faculty structures. Facilities in the poorer colleges are stretched, a few go bankrupt and there are college mergers. Some colleges become little more than halls of residence with the head of college acting as 'academic concierge' and the bursar as 'toilet-roll distributor'. Oxford slowly loses its niche market as prospective students gravitate towards the LSE, Imperial College, University College, Warwick or even the US Ivy League. In effect the combined pressures of incorporation in a mass system, state accountability pressures and parsimony triumph. And for some observers, it is already too late to save the day.

What scenario is likely to prevail? Gambling, let alone social prediction, is risky business. And the reader can make his or her own predictions, but what scenario do we think is most likely to prevail? We have claimed that change, varying in intensity over time, has been integral to Oxford and, therefore, we discount the essential re-affirmation of the status quo as portrayed in Scenario 1. Consequently, therefore, we believe there is only a slim possibility that we are witnessing a mere rearranging of the chairs on the Titanic. But should this occur, the decline of the collegiate university (Scenario 4) would be inevitable. In our fourth scenario, the pessimism of Stevens (1998) prevails. But, there is a huge volume of American evidence to demonstrate that mass systems of higher education can be internally differentiated (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010). And, in spite of the prognosis of the pessimists, there is no reason to believe that within a differentiated model Oxford would not end up towards the top end of the totem pole. It may not be in the same league as Harvard, or even Cambridge, but it would still be one of the more prestigious British universities. However, we stress again that we do not believe this very negative scenario will prevail, although some (Oxford-insiders) would argue that if Oxford were not to be placed at least in the same league as Cambridge then this would indeed be a calamitous outcome!

By a process of elimination, therefore, there is a good chance that Oxbridge's collegiality will be defined increasingly in terms of Scenario 2 or Scenario 3. Of the two the Cambridge model seems the better bet in *the short run*. Already university governance is marked by broadly parallel structures and procedures: a five plus 2-year term for the vice-chancellors, centralised administrations, hierarchical structures of governance, a small number of faculty boards and more constraints on the ability of the dons to exercise their democratic rights. However, the core of the

academic faculty at Oxford continue to wear the two hats of college and university, but – as at Cambridge – there will be an increasing tendency for the University hat to assume greater significance. Within this framework the colleges retain their independence, perhaps becoming more fissiparous; prepared to operate within the confines of university-established parameters but are less respectful of intercollegiate constraints. This is a model of collegiality that has its obvious attractions and there is a possibility that dominant sentiment within Oxford may come to the conclusion that this is the way forward, that they need to go this far but no more.

However, in our estimate Scenario 3 is the most probable long-term route down which collegiality will travel with Oxford and Cambridge moving towards a *new* convergent model. This presupposes a world of differential fees, including differential college fees, an increasing fragmentation of the academic profession, an expanding demand for higher education with a steadily increasing role for the market in the funding of higher education coupled with the continuing accountability pressures of the state. There will be several Oxfords as there will be several Cambridges. Collegiality will survive but, in the form in which we have historically known it, it will be confined to its college heartland. The federal model will give way to confederalism as many segments of the two Universities assume a semi-autonomous existence. Thus university governance is both more centralised and more localised. Perhaps we are returning to the nineteenth century as the twenty-first century takes root?

Such a shift will have a profound impact upon the three levels of collegiality. First, there would be more formally structured *intellectual collegiality* as academics were brought together in stronger and more physically tangible departmental/faculty structures (thus the arts and social studies follow the lead of the sciences). But it would be a more fragmented, and possibly more hierarchical, collegiality reflecting broader developments within the academic profession (Tight, 2009, pp. 271–297).

Second, for *collegiality as academic demos*, the academic finds professional life operating within an increasingly managed and centralised hierarchy within which his or her rights may be eroded only marginally in a formal sense but in practice are considerably restricted. Third, for *collegiality as colleges*, the college itself will retain its autonomy and identity. The college fellowship will be larger, and admissions and tutorial teaching more managed by college officers, although not determined solely by them. College governance will move to the 'Cambridge' model of an elected executive Council with less frequent meetings of the Governing Body, which meet essentially to ratify its Council's decisions. In this model there is more room for explicit leadership/management from key college officers. And then there is the question of how long the new model will prevail for, as history teaches us, universities are dynamic institutions which respond continuously to pressures for change from within and from without. There is no permanent model of the university, let alone of the idea of collegiality within the university.

Appendix: Interviewees

Anderson, E.
Baker, P.
Bowles, N.
Brock, M.
Brockliss, L.
Bullock, A.
Burn, P.
Campbell, B.
Ceadel, M.
Clarke, D.
Clarke, P.
Dopson, S.
Elliot, R.
Frazer, L.
Gibson, S.
Green, J.
Hague, D.
Halsey, A.
Hechter, M.
Innes, J.
Kirwan, C.
Lucas, J.
Millar, F.
Mirfield, P.
Nuttall, A.
Prestwich, J.
Rawson, J.
Reed, J.
Silby, M.
Smethhurst, R.
Snow, T.
Ware, A.
Williams, M.
Woods, N.

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