

2005  
American University  
Public Affairs

DAVID LAWRENCE

2201 M Street, N. W.,  
Washington, D. C.,  
January 30, 1934.

Dear Dr. Day:

Enclosed are the documents which  
Dr. Gray, Chancellor of American University, gave  
me today and which you might be interested in read-  
ing before our visit at eleven o'clock on Thursday.

Sincerely yours,

David Lawrence

Dr. Edmund E. Day,  
Director of the Social Sciences,  
Rockefeller Foundation,  
30 Rockefeller Plaza,  
New York, N. Y.  
2-31  
enclosure

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY AS A LABORATORY FOR THE STUDY OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

At no time in the history of the country has it been more important for the nation to do everything possible to place trained men and women in governmental positions, and at the same time to place in positions of leadership in the communities of the country men and women who are capable of arriving at intelligent conclusions relative to public affairs.

There are thousands of young men and women in the colleges and universities of the country who are intensely interested in government and its attendant problems. For the most part, however, they are compelled to carry on their study of government and the great issues of the day from text books, periodicals, and newspapers. Very few of them have the opportunity of knowing government at first hand and learning about its operation from persons who have had years of practical experience in the field.

There is, therefore, at the present time a very pressing need for some plan which would make it possible for outstanding students of the social sciences to come to the Capital City of the Nation and here participate in an intensive laboratory course in government.

American University is in a position to meet and care for this particular need. It can do so if it is provided with the opportunity of putting the following program into effect:

- I. The University would immediately establish a School of Public Affairs under the leadership of some of America's outstanding teachers in the field of social science.
- II. Under the auspices of this School of Public Affairs, the University would conduct laboratory courses in the field of government in the following manner:
  1. General courses dealing with the broad problems of government would be organized and would be open to all students enrolled in the School of

Public Affairs. Text books would be used only incidentally for these courses. The assumption would be that all students in the course would have an adequate background of factual information. Instead, the courses would be conducted in the following manner:

- a. The broad outlines of the courses would be charted by some of the outstanding social scientists of the nation.
- b. A series of round table discussions would be conducted with Cabinet members, and other outstanding administrative officials, Senators, and Members of the House of Representatives. These round table discussions would be conducted in such a manner as to induce the government officials in question to enter into them freely and unreservedly, and of course all points of view would be presented.
- c. Other round table discussions would be conducted in which representatives of industry, labor, and the consumer would participate. In view of the fact that representatives of all three of these groups are at the present time in Washington serving on the various advisory councils of the Department of Commerce and other agencies of government, an unparalleled opportunity presents itself to organize such discussion groups.
- d. At the conclusion of these lectures and round table discussions the students under competent faculty guidance would be required to coordinate their thinking and state their conclusions in a definite and concrete manner. In this way assurance could be given to colleges and universities asked to accredit the work done in these courses that the work was carried on in a systematic manner and in such a way as to insure the fact that the student would receive the maximum amount of benefit from the time and energy spent in the courses of the School.

2. Courses dealing with the technical administrative problems such as those

incident to the selection of proper personnel would be organized along the following lines:

- a. Specialists in the field of administration would be secured to chart the broad outlines of the work.
  - b. Round table discussions would be organized in which governmental officials who face difficult administrative problems from day to day would participate.
  - c. Here again the students under competent leadership would be required to coordinate their thinking and to state their conclusions in a definite and concrete manner.
3. Courses organized along the line of the students' special interests would be set up and conducted in such a way that the students would be able to observe in operation over a period of weeks that part of the government in which they are particularly interested. For example, the student who might be particularly interested in ultimately following a legislative career would be provided with the opportunity of sitting in at important committee hearings; of observing the manner in which committees approach and decide the problems which are submitted to them; of observing first hand just how and why certain bills are selected from the great mass of proposed legislation and finally acted upon by either House of Congress; of observing the part that individual contacts in and out of the cloak rooms play in legislation; of observing the manner in which lobbies operate, and of determining just what effect they have on ultimate legislation; and of observing the part that debate occupies on the floor of both Houses.

And again the student who might be particularly interested in agricultural problems would be provided with the opportunity of studying at first hand, in company with administrative officers, the problems which are presented to the Department of Agriculture and the manner in which

they are handled. The same thing would be done in every one of the great administrative branches of government.

And, of course, there are, at present, the emergency agencies. Students would be provided with every possible opportunity for making a close study of the manner in which these agencies function.

4. A large part of the program as outlined above could be adapted to persons carrying on graduate work as well as to both juniors and seniors in undergraduate colleges. It is clear, of course, that what the graduate student would obtain from pursuing a laboratory course of this kind and what the undergraduate might derive from similar courses would be different.

The difference would be recognized by the School of Public Affairs in the work which would be required of the undergraduate student as contrasted with the graduate student in coordinating his thinking and stating his conclusions.

Furthermore, the graduate student would be placed under the personal supervision of some member of the regular faculty of the School of Public Affairs, and would carry on his work under the direction and guidance of this particular faculty member.

5. Summary: By developing courses along the three general lines indicated above, students would become acquainted with the views of the nation's leaders on the broad issues of the day, would become acquainted with the technical, but none the less important, administrative problems that confront the Federal Government, and finally, would be able to make first hand investigations of the manner in which government deals with certain specific problems.

III. Obviously it would be virtually impossible to carry on such a program with an unlimited group of students. If an attempt were made to do so, govern-



ment officials would be reticent about talking, and government departments would feel that they were being pestered by hundreds of students with thousands of questions. If such a feeling became prevalent throughout the various departments of government, it would defeat the whole purpose of the program.

Therefore, in order to make these facilities available to the highest type of student, the University would extend invitations to certain colleges and universities to send a limited number of their very best graduate and undergraduate students in the field of the social sciences to Washington for a one-semester intensive training of this kind. In all probability, a much larger group of undergraduate students would be invited than graduate students. The program would be followed both semesters of the academic year and also during the summer session, but there would be an entirely different group of visiting students for every session of the School of Public Affairs. Students permitted to enroll for this program would be charged as low a tuition rate as possible, taking into consideration the financial backing which the University may be able to obtain for such a purpose. The University would take complete charge of providing them with proper living accommodations.

Recognizing the fact that there would always be worthy students who would be unable to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the School of Public Affairs, because of financial difficulties, the University would do everything in its power to build up an endowment which would enable it to provide worthy undergraduate students with scholarships, and outstanding graduate students with fellowships.

IV. The School of Public Affairs of American University would be organized as follows:

1. In order to secure the advice and cooperation of outstanding men and women both in and out of public life, an Advisory Council for the

School would be organized. Service on this Council would be purely voluntary, but every possible effort would be made to obtain advice and cooperation from the members of the Council.

2. The academic work would be in large part under the supervision of visiting professors of social science. That is, for every semester, or for every academic year, some outstanding leader in the field of the social sciences, such as Professor's Beard, Holcombe, Ogg, Muzzey, and Corwin, might be invited to come to American University and act as Visiting or Associate Dean of the School of Public Affairs for a stated period. In this way the School would, over a period of time, have the advantage of securing the cooperation and guidance of a large part of outstanding men in the field of the social sciences.
3. Obviously, under the plan as outlined above, the Visiting or Associate Dean of the School could not be made responsible for any of the administrative details in connection with the work. These would be placed in the hands of an administrative officer who might, in the beginning, be known as Executive Director of the School of Public Affairs, and who later might be known as Dean, and who would have complete charge of working out schedules, making the necessary contacts and seeing to it that the work of the School functions efficiently and smoothly. He would also be responsible for balancing the budget of the School.
4. The permanent faculty of the School of Public Affairs would be drawn at first from the present faculties of the University. These faculty members would continue to carry on work in both departments of the institution, but in addition their programs would be so worked out that they would also be able to devote considerable time and energy to the program of the School. It would be this faculty which would recommend to the University faculties what work carried on by students enrolled

in the School would be given a certain amount of either undergraduate or graduate credit.

5. In addition to the permanent faculty of the School of Public Affairs, the University would also enter into an arrangement with outstanding teachers in the field of the social sciences whereby they would come to Washington for one semester, or for one academic year, observe the program in operation, and give at least one lecture a week in their particular field of study.