In October 1988, Mrs. Gail Johnstone invited University Counsel and Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs Sanford H. Levine to give an informal talk about State University's history to spouses gathered at the Administrators' Retreat at the Gideon Putnam in Saratoga Springs. The following is an edited transcript of those comments.

I want to thank you for inviting me. It gives me a chance to talk about a subject which has been a part of my life, the historic development of the State University of New York.

My own involvement with the legal affairs of the University goes back over 21 years. As you know, SUNY is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. And at the same time, the State University is opening the next chapter with the arrival of a new Chancellor.

We do not have any public celebrations planned for the 40th, but it is a significant time, for 40 years ago the Legislature decided to create an institution that would become the largest university in the nation.

Forty years may be a very short period of time in New York history, but when Gail first asked me to come talk with you this morning, I thought of Mel Brooks, the filmmaker and comic. He made a movie some time ago called "History of the World, Part I." He never made Parts II, III and IV. Is this presentation Part V? There's so much to condense into this brief format. I will barely be able to give an overview.
I would like to talk about several key themes that have emerged in the 40 years. It seems to me significant that every time there has been a major new direction or initiative, it has come as a result of a special report produced by a University task force or top level outside consultants appointed to a blue ribbon panel. As points of reference, I will identify just four of them. SUNY traces its formal creation, for example, to the YOUNG COMMISSION REPORT in 1948, chaired by a former chairman of the General Electric Company. Another significant report, one that is not mentioned very often, was the BLEGEN REPORT in 1957. A third turning point was reached following the HEALD COMMITTEE REPORT in 1960 and then, most recently, THE REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY in 1985. For some reason, the Independent Commission has never been called the Davidson-Ennarson Report after its co-chairmen.

The history of the State of New York regarding public higher education is not like that of any other state in the country. That's where we start. In the mid-1800's, public sentiment across the country supported the establishment of the great state land-grant universities, principally as a result of the passage of the Morrill Act of 1862 which provided for grants of federal lands to states for the creation of educational institutions.

In New York, however, the push for public higher education met a resistance not experienced in other states due to our
exceptional tradition of first-rate, strong independent private colleges. New York's response to the Morrill Act, for example, resulted ultimately in the establishment of publicly-supported colleges at Cornell University and its designation as the land-grant institution. These forces in New York were so powerful that whenever the issue of a separate system of public higher education was discussed, there was opposition from the private institutions and the Board of Regents—a feeling that the people really didn't need a system of public higher education in New York.

Now was there State-operated public higher education in New York? Yes, teacher-training institutions. For example, Potsdam was founded in 1816, Albany in 1843. The State also created after 1900 a cluster of agricultural and technical institutes. New York did not embrace, however, the concept of establishing a single great State University campus, or alternatively a series of major State institutions. Instead, all the way down to World War II, we had a collection of institutions, unrelated to each other, funded in part or in whole by the State of New York without a central coordinating body. These institutions would send their budget requests through the Education Department on the way to the State Legislature. The State Education Department provided a loose oversight role because of the budget, but no direction.

All of these early developments came by fits and starts.
The Constitutional Convention in 1915 reviewed the status of public higher education in New York, but rejected changes. There were more false starts during the 1930's, but really no great push for a major public campus or unified system.

All that changed considerably after World War II as a result of several different factors. It became evident that the State of New York educational system would not be able to accommodate the post-war baby boom. Another critical factor was the strong leadership of Governor Dewey who was thinking about a national agenda during his two presidential campaigns in 1944 and 1948. He continued as Governor through 1954.

There was also an impetus in New York City for more public higher education opportunities for those in the city. There simply was not enough room in higher education for all those seeking to enter its halls.

Another great force at that time was the growing realization after the war that discrimination in New York was rather pervasive in regard to admissions to private colleges and universities. Not only was this evident at the undergraduate and graduate levels, but particularly in medical schools.

Governor Dewey concluded that these problems should be dealt with publicly. He asked in 1946 for the creation of a special Temporary Commission to Study the Needs for a State University. Owen D. Young, former chairman of the board of the General Electric Company, was named to head the panel whose
studies lasted 18 months. They focused on three principal areas. One, could the State meet the needs for higher education looking ahead 25 years? Two, what kind of system should there be if one was to be created? And three, how should higher education overcome pervasive discrimination?

When we talk in 1988 about that last problem, when we hear about discrimination as an issue, we think primarily of minority groups. Back in 1946, however, minority groups were not just the groups we identify today—African American, Hispanic, Pacific Islanders, Asians, and Native Americans. Back in 1946 that label also included the Jewish community, the Italian community, and the Catholic community. The Young Commission's staff reports of 1946-48 found, for instance, that Jewish applicants simply could not get into the private medical schools in the State of New York. And, as you may have read from recent documentation, these patterns of deliberate discrimination existed at Yale and the other Ivies, and throughout private higher education.

The Young Commission had representatives from private higher education, the Board of Regents, representatives from many different communities across the State, and politicians of various persuasions. They debated whether to recommend a centralized system; technical training versus general studies; and how to handle discrimination. One result was the early passage of a law that authorized the Regents to investigate
claims of discrimination in admissions to higher education, a law still available but seldom utilized. What they couldn't come to an agreement on quickly was what to do with the 32 separately administered existing State institutions. Should they focus only on vocational preparation? Joining this argument were the representatives of the private colleges and universities in the State who felt entitled to maintain their lock on liberal arts and graduate education. We heard distant echoes of this just two years ago when the University developed the Graduate Research Initiative.

Ultimately, the Young Commission made the momentous recommendation, which the Legislature adopted, to combine the 32 institutions into a single entity, the State University of New York. An important catalyst in reaching that conclusion was the active participation of John E. Burton, the Director of the Budget and Governor Dewey's representative on the Commission. I am delighted to say that he is still with us today; in fact, he attended a recent dedication at a State University campus where he remembered quite clearly some of the debates of that Commission, which led directly to the establishment of the University in 1948.

You may recall that 1948 was also the year that Governor Dewey's popularity propelled him so close to winning the White House that the Chicago Tribune actually ran the famous November election night headline, "Dewey Defeats Truman." The Young
Commission Report was issued in February of 1948 and the bills were enacted into law in March. Dewey's determination to create the State University system and assert his authority was immediately tested, however, because bitter conflict erupted at once with the Board of Regents.

The Regents very strongly opposed the formation of a separate free-standing University, with its own Board of Trustees appointed by the Governor, that would not be under the total domination of the Board of Regents. The Regents felt that if there was to be a public higher education system, it should be fully subject to their controls and approvals.

One of the initial compromises in 1948 was that the first State University Board of Trustees would be only a temporary board, a situation that continued until 1954. In that same legislative session, an amendment to the statute was immediately enacted that postponed the authority of the temporary Board of Trustees to take over the 32 institutions with their 27,000 students for an entire year to early 1949. That gave the Regents the time to prepare a legislative proposal, known as the Condon-Barrett bill, which tried to undo almost all of the provisions that had been enacted into law. In the showdown, Governor Dewey and the State University of New York prevailed.

Now you may wonder, doesn't the statute now say that the State University is created as a corporation in the State Education Department and within the University of the State of
New York? The answer is yes. The confusion over that designation was part of this battle back then, and it has continued almost to the present day. You may recall that although the State University lost its legal challenge to the Board of Regents in the late '70's over whether the Regents had the power to deregister academic programs, the courts did recognize in *Moore v. Board of Regents* that the State University of New York stands with the same footing before the Board of Regents as any other public or private higher education institution. All New York colleges and universities are part of the University of the State of New York, the formal collective name for all sectors of education in the State of New York.

Now, why is the State University also technically in the State Education Department in the statute? Well, I can describe many reasons, but one that was apparent was the existence of a State constitutional provision that limited the number of State departments that could be created. The University, as a separate State corporate entity, therefore, was organized within an existing department.

The battle of 1949 was so bitter that the Regents received a recommendation from their counsel that the issues be brought to litigation. They felt that the statute creating State University of New York, even with limited powers for the Trustees, was unconstitutional. The litigation was never brought. From 1949 through 1960, however, SUNY remained closely aligned
with the Board of Regents—so much so that curricula proposals and budget requests were submitted by the Board of Trustees to the Regents before they went to the Governor. The budget situation became a more significant problem during the '50's, leading ultimately to the Heald Committee several years later.

The first Chairman of the temporary Board of Trustees was Oliver C. Carmichael, the Vice Chairman of the Young Commission, and the first President of the State University of New York was Alvin C. Eurich, who had been Acting President of Stanford University. Actually, the Regents even objected to the use of the title of President of State University. Let him be called the Executive Director of Planning or something else, they said. Well, after much-to-do, Dr. Eurich became President. In my view, the Trustees' exclusive authority to appoint the person to be the chief executive officer of the system, by whatever title, is probably the most significant responsibility the Trustees enjoy.

The first office of Central Administration was in the basement of the State Education Department. In 1949 the University's administration moved to the State Capitol. A decade later property was acquired on Thurlow Terrace which some of you may remember. Then we moved to the Twin Towers in Albany, and ultimately in 1978 to State University Plaza in downtown Albany, the former corporate headquarters of the Delaware and Hudson Railway and the separate offices of the old Albany Evening
Journal. There was a time in fact in the late '60's when the various offices within the Central Administration actually were housed in 13 different locations in Albany.

The brand new State University turned its attention almost immediately to medical education. You will recall that it was this area where the most severe discrimination had been exposed, and there was a strong feeling that government had an obligation to provide more universal access.

In 1950, two medical schools were acquired--probably two of the most significant events to occur in the University in the early years. The Trustees acquired the existing Long Island College of Medicine, and then acquired from Syracuse University its College of Medicine, both in the same year. As you know, they were to be called for a long time, Upstate and Downstate. Why? Because in the history of the State of New York there has been a continual balancing act in the provision of State services based on many factors including geographical considerations.

Since the two medical schools at Brooklyn and Syracuse were already operating institutions, it was relatively easy to continue them in operation. Certain legal issues, such as managing the endowment, remained unresolved until the early 1970's. But in 1950 the University was off and running and without the discrimination that was present in many private institutions. The State University of New York offered two fine
medical schools.

Another issue was, what about liberal arts education? The same battle that was fought in the Young Commission still was not resolved. There was a continuing tug-of-war over whether there ought to be more technical training and emphasis on teacher preparation—or whether emphasis should also be placed on liberal arts and research. There were institutes for the applied arts and sciences which ultimately became the community colleges. I believe the Board of Trustees reached an understanding in the early '50's that the University would not for a period of years invade the territory of the private liberal arts institutions, at least not overtly.

We did have, however, the beginnings of two liberal arts colleges, although one did not last. Champlain College, which was part originally of a group of State-supported Associated Colleges, was one that was included in the 1948 creation of State University. Then an institution called Triple Cities College was acquired, which Syracuse University had created in the Southern Tier after the war. Triple Cities, a liberal arts institution, became Harpur College and ultimately State University at Binghamton. But for a period in the '50's when Champlain College closed because the Federal government took back the land, Harpur College was the only liberal arts institution for undergraduates in the University system.

The University in the '50's was primarily a collection of
teacher-training institutions, the Maritime campus, and the College of Forestry which is closely aligned with Syracuse University. Also included were three temporary colleges including Champlain (two of them went out of business pretty early), and five contract colleges.

The temporary Board of Trustees was given the assignment, the responsibility to wear three hats. One was to administer directly the State-operated campuses. This included the authority to hire and fire, set curricula, regulate tuition and fees, and a host of traditional powers and duties at the fully State-funded colleges.

The second assignment was to supervise generally the contract colleges at Cornell and Alfred Universities. Again that tradition goes back to the time when the State authorized the creation of publicly-supported institutions on a private campus following the Morrill Act. That is how Cornell evolved as a major private institution with State components—along with the designation as the land-grant institution in the State of New York. Today we call the four contract colleges at Cornell, and Ceramics at Alfred, statutory colleges.

You may know that the State University Trustees do not operate the statutory colleges. They are operated by Cornell and Alfred for the State of New York. State University's review over what they do or don't do is significantly different from how the State campuses are operated. In 1948 Cornell particu-
larly expressed great anxiety over what was going to happen to these colleges as a result of the creation of State University of New York. My assessment in 1988 is that very little changed, either at that time or since, and they are still operated as units of Cornell or Alfred. The statutory colleges are subject, however, to the general supervision of the Trustees, and their budgets flow through the Trustees' program budget for the entire system.

The third area of responsibility was the community colleges. The creation of local campuses to address community needs was a new concept that was developed by the Young Commission, and there were no such colleges until 1950. The Board of Trustees wears a different hat here. Community colleges are all part of units of local government rather than integral agencies of State government. When I say local government, I mean that these colleges must be sponsored by a county, school district, a city, or some combination, subject to the approval of the SUNY Trustees. The first community colleges were begun in Jamestown and in Orange County in 1950. Again, '50 was a wonderful year for the State University of New York. The temporary Trustees were starting to flex their muscle, even though they were somewhat limited by the approval powers of the Board of Regents.

The community colleges are State-aided institutions, not State-operated. This difference is significant in many ways. For example, the SUNY Trustees appoint the Presidents of the
State-operated campuses, but for the community colleges, the Trustees approve the colleges' appointments of Presidents. Similarly, for the statutory colleges, the Trustees approve the appointment of the Deans by Cornell and Alfred. These differences in the hiring and firing of the chief administrative officers are representative of the various different levels of oversight exercised by the Trustees.

The temporary Trustees were given the assignment to devise a plan for the permanent governance of the system. They were asked to decide, for example, whether there should be an individual board of trustees on each campus, and only a loose coordinating top body; or whether there should be boards of visitors, which, as the name implies, have less authority than boards of trustees. Should there be a powerful central body—or no formal body at all?

After much study the Trustees advised Governor Dewey that the only way the State University would grow and function and function well was with one Board of Trustees, one set of trustees with ultimate governance authority for the entire system, no matter what hat they were wearing. At the same time the Trustees and the Governor were equally sensitive to the demands of the local communities, since some of the previously separate institutions had oversight bodies similar to boards of visitors.

What was created in 1953 was a hybrid. When the permanent board of trustees legislation was introduced and adopted, the
Trustees remained the governing body of the entire system and every State-operated campus was assigned a council (with the exception of the College of Forestry which retained a board of trustees). The councils were, like all legislative compromises, something in the middle. The statute assigned limited responsibilities to the councils, but all of the duties of the councils, as well as the board at Forestry, were made subject to the control, management, or approval of the State University Trustees. As you know, this hybrid arrangement is not easily understood particularly by council members. And so even today, council members will question the scope of their powers.

Many significant things occurred as a result of the 1953 legislation in addition to the Board of Trustees becoming permanent. A new Board was named and a new Chairman was designated. Frank C. Moore remained Chairman for the next crucial decade. Moore had been Comptroller and Lieutenant Governor of the State of New York under Governor Dewey, and he was a powerful man who understood government.

The University system's chief executives continued to be called Presidents. We didn't have a Chancellor by that title until 1964. Succeeding Ehrich, in 1952, was William S. Carlson who stayed until 1958 when he had a run-in with the Board of Trustees over the issue of how the University would enter the fields of graduate education and research, and expand undergraduate instruction. A professor from Minnesota, Theodore C.
Blegen, had been commissioned by the Research Foundation of State University of New York (a separate educational corporation established in 1951 to administer sponsored research programs for the University) to study the broad issues of organized research. Professor Blegen concluded that State University would never become a great system if a flagship campus was not selected and assigned the research mission. He was referring to the experience of states like Wisconsin, Illinois and Minnesota. When the Blegen recommendations were discussed with the Board of Trustees, it is fair to say that President Carlson agreed with the report and the Trustees did not.

The issue, therefore, was clearly drawn with the Trustees finally declaring that the strength of the SUNY system was the development of many strong individual campuses, and not just one major flagship or predominant campus. Out of that debate in the late '50's came the decision ultimately, though not immediately, that what would be built in the State University of New York would be the four comprehensive graduate centers we have today. In 1957, for example, Stony Brook had been planned as another teacher-training institution and it took many years to develop its expanded mission. Another major step was taken in 1962 with the merger of the private University of Buffalo into the system as the State University of New York at Buffalo. Very much a part of that strategy was the decision to convert the teacher-training institutions into full-fledged liberal arts campuses.
The most significant thing that occurred for the University following the debate over the Blegen Report, and you may know that all these things are not totally coincidental, was the election of Nelson Rockefeller as Governor in 1958. From my perspective, Governor Rockefeller thought in broad conceptual terms. I joined State University during his administration. It wasn't do you want to build a building here, do you want to build a building there. It was: what should the State do for public higher education? He recognized that the 1958 structure of the State University was not going to meet the needs for the 1960's, 1970's, 1980's, and beyond.

You may not know that the State University of New York is barely described in the New York State Constitution at all. I mention that because if you come from other states where there are major public higher education institutions, you know that those institutions have state constitutional mandates. In our State, the State University of New York is purely statutory. That means the Legislature gives and the Legislature takes away. But there is one place the State University is mentioned in the current State Constitution, just one. In 1957 under Governor Harriman, there was a constitutional referendum to allow the State University to build academic facilities under State bonding requirements authorized in the State Constitution. These requirements provide, simply, that in order to incur a debt of the people of the State, you must have an affirmative vote by ballot referendum.
In 1957, for the first and only time, the University went to the people to ask whether State debt could be issued for new facilities for the State University. The proposition was for the grand sum of $250 million, which was not a small amount in those days. It was passed by the people and that is why we have that one provision that authorizes the $250 million in the State Constitution. But Rockefeller became Governor and soon recognized that $250 million was not the level of financing that would be adequate to fund the kind of institution the State would be needing in the coming decades. So in 1960, he said what was needed was a major panel to review the future of higher education in the State of New York.

Henry T. Heald, former head of New York University, John W. Gardner and Marion B. Folsom, familiar names in higher education, were the three people asked by Governor Rockefeller to study the issues. Out of that examination came the Heald Committee Report of 1960, and that report set the foundation for the next major expansion, the agenda for State University for the '60's and '70's.

Heald's report, by the way, was not just restricted to State University. The Committee reported broadly about higher education policy for all sectors in the State of New York, following the State's tradition of support for strong private higher education. That tradition is the basis for the Regents' scholarship system, and what is now called the Tuition Assist-
ance Program, or TAP. The Heald Committee for the first time recommended a new form of direct State subsidy to private higher education. The Heald idea ultimately became enacted into law eight years later following a further report which Governor Rockefeller commissioned from McGeorge Bundy. As you may know, so-called Bundy money is tax support provided directly to private New York institutions based on the number of degrees awarded each year, regardless of the residency of the degree recipients.

In 1960 we had a new President of State University, Thomas E. Hamilton, who had been appointed in 1959. I have gone back and read the submissions he prepared for the Heald Committee, and they could have been written for the Independent Commission in 1984. The University was struggling for independence, flexibility, and the ability to determine SUNY's own destiny. One of the most significant results of the Heald report was legislation that strengthened the Regents' master planning process but finally freed the State University from the various other approval procedures of the Regents that were so stifling to University initiatives. Those recommendations, along with several others in that report, took about three to four years to be accepted by the Legislature.

It turned out, however, according to the stories, that Rockefeller and Hamilton didn't necessarily get along, and so by 1962 Hamilton left and became President of the University of
Hawaii. He was succeeded at State University by an acting Chief Administrative Officer—a man quite central to many key decisions in the University in the Rockefeller expansion years, J. Lawrence Murray.

Governor Rockefeller saw that you couldn't plan and build a great university, the facilities needed for the future, by returning time after time for constitutional referenda approvals. He asked for alternatives—I believe he enjoyed creative people. I am told that John Mitchell, who you may remember later served as Attorney General in the Nixon administration and was disbarred after Watergate, was involved because he was an astute bond counsel. The Governor's advisors developed a concept which, depending where you sit, you think is either the height of creativity, or the pit of bottomless debt. They prepared the legal basis for moral obligation financing.

Rather than seek referendum approval, the Governor proposed that a separate bond agency be created to sell bonds backed by a flow of user revenues, in our case—tuition and all University income, to pay off those bonds. But it would not be the Legislature's responsibility legally to pay the debt service, only the State's moral obligation to assure there is no default in bond obligations. That's the concept that was applied to State University in 1962. And some argue the broad expansion of such debt for many sectors of State services far beyond State University ultimately stretched the credit-worthiness of the State of
New York into near bankruptcy by 1975. Let's accept the conclusion, however, that it was a brilliant idea, and it was. the leadership of the University and the State University Construction Fund will attest to that as we look back over the creation of almost $3 billion of academic facilities.

By 1964 the University secured the single most important piece of legislation until the flexibility legislation in the '80's. SUNY was permitted to certify positions into what is called the unclassified or professional service. That meant that the campuses could free the appointment of faculty from budgeted line items, from Civil Service Commission approvals and review, examinations, and whatever exceptions were needed. The practical result was that the best faculty could now be recruited from around the country by the now-rapidly developing campuses.

The University developed a new academic image. By 1964, the University had a brand new Chancellor, the first by that title, Samuel B. Gould. He started as President but he quickly observed that what the position needed was additional visibility. I am told that he and Governor Rockefeller understood each other and the money started to flow. The largest percentage increases in SUNY budget history occurred during Chancellor Gould's six years. The system expanded by huge proportions, and there are even anecdotes about not knowing where to spend all the funds each year. I don't agree necessarily with that. I
was recruited during the Rockefeller-Gould years and I don't remember money flowing all that well, especially at my initial starting salary. But it was a period when the institution was shaped essentially as we now know it. It was a period of growth of the medical schools and teaching hospitals, growth of the four-year university centers, and the completion of the conversion of the teacher-training institutions and colleges of education into colleges of arts and science. The agricultural and technical institutes became the agriculture and technical colleges. We had the great expansion of the community colleges. The State University set out to put higher education within reach of every New Yorker. And that is what we have today.

The last two institutions created in the State University were Empire State College and the College of Optometry, both in 1971. You may be surprised to learn that the University opposed the creation of the College of Optometry, although the Governor didn't agree and he signed the legislation. At that time SUNY had already reached a plateau. What happened after Gould left in 1970 and was succeeded by Ernest L. Boyer as Chancellor, was that the economy of the State of New York started to slide downwards. For the very first time in the Rockefeller era the University did not receive what it asked for in State budget support, and it was a shock. It was repeated, as you may know, in a more severe form in 1975 and 1976, which was a major retrenchment period. So although Ernie Boyer introduced many
new initiatives, he did preside over the management of a "steady state" rather than an expansion of resources.

At our height, the State University system numbered 72 campuses. You may not be familiar with this figure. Most people don't know that until 1975, under the community college laws of the State of New York, the eight community colleges created within the City University were also part of the State University system. State financial assistance for these colleges flowed through the State University. In fact, until 1965, the local assistance appropriations for the entire City University of New York flowed through the State University budget.

The City University's community college relationship to the State University was changed by a severance bill in 1975. Now fully a part of the CUNY system, these eight community colleges continue to receive State aid according to the SUNY formula but the appropriations flow directly to City University rather than through State University. So-in-1975 State University became a system of 64 campuses, a number that continues to the present.

On another related funding issue, you may be interested to learn that until the late '60s the per capita funding to promote the expansion of medical education in the State, which meant the subsidies of the private medical colleges, also flowed through the State University budget. The State University of New York budget was used as a protective cover for many purposes.
To go back in time, for a moment, I should explain that the 1960 Heald Committee Report also recommended a major change in tuition policy for the State University. Instead of a haphazard combination of fees, a standardized tuition charge applicable to all the State-operated campuses was implemented by the Trustees in 1963. This was sound management; but actually its primary purpose was to provide the revenue source I described earlier which was pledged to pay the debt service of the University's major new capital construction bonding program financed through the Housing Finance Agency. "It is only the excess of revenue not needed for debt service that is applied to the University's operating budget.

As I have indicated, the tuition-backed bonding program was such a creative idea that through this year $3 billion of academic facilities have been designed and constructed through the State University Construction Fund. Since this amount also served as a "cap," a statute was enacted this year to authorize for the future an additional $1 billion capital construction program. The difference is that the new program, which will be financed through the Dormitory Authority, will be supported not out of tuition but out of direct State appropriations for annual debt service. If you look around and travel the State as I have, you are just awed by what has been built and the number of people who have benefitted. You can argue the funding philosophy, the indebtedness, the long-term effect on State credit-
worthiness, but you can't argue about the immensity of the accomplishment.

Another key matter I should mention: independence and autonomy in the State University. It had been a critical issue right from the start in 1948. Every leader has tried to obtain what is the equivalent of what the other great public institutions in the country enjoy in the operation of a major University. We still operate under a State Constitution, last generally revised in 1938, with many subsequent separate amendments. The most recent attempt at general revision was in 1967 when the people said yes, let's have a Constitutional Convention. I had been a counsel on the Temporary State Commission to prepare for the Constitutional Convention, and the State University, I thought, asked me to join the Office of University Counsel in order to assist in the battle. What was desired, I was advised, was a constitutional amendment that would guarantee autonomy for the University. But the lingering battles from '48 still smoldered. The University's proposals never saw the light of day. There were no basic changes even in the one omnibus amendment that was sent to the people for approval--and defeated.

We are, therefore, still operating under the old Constitution, a concern that was destined to come up again in the '80's under Chancellor Clifton R. Wharton, Jr. In addition to his own conclusions on the need of the University for greater institu-
tional autonomy, he was hearing complaints about the multiple levels of State agency oversight from the campuses and from many civic bodies. Everyone believed that the SUNY Trustees needed additional flexibility in managing the University's budget. As you know, Clif Wharton conceived the idea of creating a blue ribbon commission of business leaders and educators to conduct a new major study.

The Independent Commission on the Future of the State University began work in 1984 under the co-chairmanship of Ralph P. Davidson and Harold L. Enarson, and confronted the question of how to accomplish the type of changes urgently needed. They reviewed the possibility of constitutional amendment; they recommended, however, the conversion of SUNY from a State agency into a public benefit corporation. Although the public corporation idea was not ultimately accepted, the Trustees and Chancellor Wharton did achieve in 1985 the passage of the landmark flexibility legislation which provides significant management authority over University resources. This legislation was the greatest step forward since the Heald Committee Report in assisting SUNY to achieve the independence necessary to set its own destiny, to operate the University in the most effective way with the resources provided. The Independent Commission also, as you know, identified the need for the Graduate Research Initiative and other major programs now under way.

The State University serves today about 380,000 students,
and boasts of its over 1 million alumni. Throughout our 40 year history the University has been well-served by the strong leadership of the Chancellors and Presidents. We are about to enter a major new era with the appointment of D. Bruce Johnstone, the first SUNY campus president to serve as Chancellor.

We must pay tribute, however, to the Trustees who have been the absolute rock support for the system. I say that because I have known them for over 20 years, and I do not know another group of more dedicated and devoted public servants. They have equally been served by the leadership of outstanding SUNY Board chairmen. After Frank Moore's 11 year tenure in the chairmanship, Clifton W. Phalen served for over two years. Next appointed was Elisabeth Luce Moore, a coincidence of the same last name as Frank Moore. I believe she was very close to Rockefeller, as was Chancellor Gould. Beth Moore continued for 10 years, succeeded by Donald M. Blinken. Chairman Blinken has now served for over 11 years.

The University has been most fortunate because with that continuity you achieve strength and stability. With that stability, the Trustees for 40 years have been able to develop the kind of vision essential to long-term growth. For those of you who know the current Trustees, you know what I am talking about. They are outstanding New York citizens whose only pay for their work is a simple "thank you."

From my perspective, the Trustees have been able to develop
a system that works. The beauty of that system is that there is
one Board that has been able to handle all of the competing
interests. Instead of an external process, all campuses are
responsible to the Trustees and Chancellor who make the critical
choices for the State University of New York. There is one
University program budget which the Trustees propose, protect
and advance or, behalf of all of the campuses. That has been the
strength of the system, and this strength derives from the very
basic governance decision in 1948 made by the Young Commission.

During the past 40 years there have been ups and downs,
growth and re-trenchment. We are about to enter, as you heard
from Chancellor Johnstone, one of those periods of budget
reduction. I believe the Board of Trustees is confident the
University has the flexibility to make effective use of the
available resources. The University is necessarily part of the
political structure and the Trustees depend on the support of
the Legislature and the Governor. But at the same time, with
maturity the State University has acquired the independence that
is essential for administering a first-rate institution of 64
campuses for the people of New York.