

INTRODUCTION

Mabel L. Rice
The Fred and Virginia Merrill Distinguished Professor
of Advanced Studies and
Director, Merrill Advanced Studies Center
University of Kansas

This year marked the seventh annual research policy retreat hosted by the Merrill Center in Valley Falls, Kansas. Our topic in 2003 was: *Recruiting and Training Future Scientists: How Policy Shapes the Mission of Graduate Education*. The future of scientific inquiry depends on the recruitment of high achieving young people and robust graduate-level research training experiences. This requires financial resources for student support, focused attention on graduate level curricula at the university level, and a cadre of productive faculty researchers to serve as mentors. In the pressure of recent funding declines, it can be a challenge for public universities to marshal these resources and prioritize the training of future researchers. During this retreat we focused on the challenges of graduate education from the perspective of recruiting and training future scientists.

Two keynote speakers provided views from the top leadership levels in the U.S. and Canada. Debra Stewart, President of the Council of Graduate Schools, spoke about challenges to graduate education in light of the push for curriculum reform, budget cuts, and new rules on immigration. She urged universities to continue broadening the talent pool as affirmed recently by the Supreme Court in the Michigan decision. Martha Crago, President of the Canadian Association of Graduate Studies, gave an update on initiatives in Canada, and offered her insights on how to build programs for the future during hard times, based on her experience as an administrator at McGill University. Both speakers addressed key issues about retention of students in the doctoral track, efficiency in time to degree, and making the rules of the game transparent.

Twenty-three administrators and senior faculty came as teams from public universities in the Midwest: Iowa State University, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, the University of Missouri-Columbia, Kansas State University, the University of Kansas and the KU Medical Center in Kansas City, Kansas. Also joining us were Keith Yehle from the office of Senator Pat Roberts and David Kensinger from the office of Senator Sam Brownback.

The 2003 topic built on discussions at the six previous retreats in the Merrill series *The Research Mission of Public Universities*. Our benefactors, Virginia and Fred Merrill, to whom we are deeply appreciative, support these

conferences. The inaugural event in 1997 focused on pressures that hinder the research mission of higher education. In 1998, we turned our attention to competing for new resources, and ways to enhance individual and collective productivity. Michael Crow, our keynote speaker that year, encouraged us to identify niche areas for research focus, under the premise that it was most promising to do selective areas of investigation at the highest levels of excellence. In 1999, we examined in more depth cross-university alliances. Keynote speaker Luis Proenza encouraged participants to think in terms of "strategic intent" and he highlighted important precedents in university-industry cooperation as well as links between institutions. In 2000, we focused on making research a part of the public agenda. We heard from George Walker who encouraged us to meet the needs of our state citizens, business leaders and students who are quite able to "carry our water" and champion the cause of research as a valuable state resource. In 2001, Joan Lorden brought to the table her experience with the topic of evaluating research productivity. She provided a valuable overview of key elements to consider when selecting measures for evaluating performance, with a focus on the very important National Research Council (NRC) study from 1995. Our keynote speaker in 2002 was Martin Apple, President of the Council of Scientific Society Presidents. In light of 9/11, he proposed unique ways that universities can lend expertise on bioterrorism, while at the same time remaining faithful to the task of generating new knowledge that can lead to societal benefits such as better health and sustainable energy sources.

As always, the pages of the Merrill white paper reveal many fascinating perspectives, and a frank examination of the complex issues faced by research administrators and scientists every day. It is with pleasure that I encourage you to read the papers from the 2003 Merrill policy retreat on *Recruiting and Training Future Scientists: How Policy Shapes the Mission of Graduate Education*.