CHAPTER IV

THE ADMINISTRATION OF ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY COMPARED WITH THE ADMINISTRATIVE CRITERIA

The administration of Atlantic University compared to Criterion #1: a well-administered school is democratic. It is difficult to make a single statement in regard to the democratic attitude of the administration of Atlantic University that will be entirely correct. There were probably many separate acts which would indicate that the administration of Atlantic University was democratic. Nevertheless, the decisions that had such a definite effect upon the life of the University and the lives of the faculty members were not brought up by the administration for discussion before the faculty. The disastrous financial circumstances were kept quiet as long as possible, and the introduction of new courses and the hiring of new faculty members, even though it involved a possible reduction in the salaries of those already employed, were not disclosed for faculty consideration. Moreover, the faculty had no voice in determining the offerings of the curriculum. The curricular aims of the institution had been delineated

63 Supra, p. 33, lines 6-11.
64 Interview, Dr. Mina Kerr, Dec. 24, 1947.
by the administration, especially in relation to psychic research, before the school opened. A further example of the lack of democratic administration may be observed in the manner in which the decision to operate a summer session (1931) was reached. Neither the student body nor the major number of faculty members were aware that such a decision had been made by the administration or acquainted with the considerations which led to it. These situations indicate that the administration of Atlantic University, so far as its relations with the faculty were concerned, was not democratic.

The history of Atlantic University would seem to indicate that the University presents itself best to the scrutinizing investigator when it is considered as high adventure. For all practical purposes it was an educational adventure after October 11, 1930. In the judgment of one of the administrative officers, from that date the best chance the school had for success was for the administration to allow complete democracy within the institution. Democratic action could have provided inner strength through cooperation among faculty, students, and administration. The entire school might have joined together in an adventure in education.

65 Supra, p. 37, lines 23-24.

66 Interview, Dr. Mina Kerr, December 24, 1947.
It is possible that if, on October 11th, 1930, the administration had revealed to the faculty and the student body the exact financial situation, the school might have closed at the end of the first semester. Had the school closed, the responsibility for closing the school then would have rested upon the members of the board of trustees who had withdrawn their support. Without this communication, the responsibility for continuing the school must be placed on the administration since it continued the operation of the school on its own initiative and without proper financial backing.

It seems evident that if democratic principles of administration had been followed, there would have been one of two possible outcomes. Atlantic University might have continued in existence and become an effective and successful educational enterprise. On the other hand, if such principles had been followed, the school might have closed earlier, causing less hardship and financial loss. Since democratic action was not practiced, however, the degeneration of the organization caused much personal hardship and ultimate bankruptcy.

Since all educational institutions, secondary schools as well as colleges, have institutional organizations comprising administration, faculty, and students, it is indicated that the principle of democratic administration would
apply equally to all schools.

The administration of Atlantic University compared to Criterion #2: a well-administered school operates according to administrative policies consistent with a sound philosophy of education; these policies should be understood by all who participate in the life of the school.

For the purpose of discussing this criterion the existence of Atlantic University will be divided into two parts. The first part has to do with the University conceived and supported by the first board of trustees. The second part has to do with the University after the first board had withdrawn its support on October 11th, 1930, until the closing of the school in mid-December, 1931.

All the evidence indicates that the first board of trustees wanted a small school primarily in which metaphysics could be studied. The administration was not opposed to the idea of studying metaphysics, or of psychic research being done scientifically, but the administration thought that "institutional respectability" should be gained first. Evidence indicates that the board agreed to this. However, there was no agreement as to the method of obtaining respectability. The board thought the administration was extravagant. The two parties agreed on words, but actually there was no meeting of the minds concerning

67 Supra, p. 32, lines 3-24.
the meaning of "respectability". Thus it is evident to the student of administration that the situation which led to the resignation of the first board of trustees might have been avoided had the administration and the board of trustees formulated a clear philosophy of education in general and of education at Atlantic University in particular. Moreover, it is indicated that a philosophy which was thoroughly understood by both parties and was thereafter applied consistently might have prevented the subsequent schism.

After October 11th, at which time the first board of trustees resigned, a new board composed of local people was appointed. The philosophy of the University from that time was largely the philosophy of the school's administration. The administration was responsible for the board that was appointed and the board acquiesced in all the administration desired. From that date the objective of the administration should have been to create an educational institution of such worth to the community that the community would support it. This is a sound educational aim and might have been successfully achieved if a careful study of community needs and resources had been undertaken. If on October 11th the administration had told the com-

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69 Interview, Dr. Roland Wagner, December 26, 1947.
munity and the people connected with the college what the financial circumstances were, it is possible that the school might have been saved. Instead, the community, the students, and the faculty were in ignorance of the actual situation. The people of Norfolk and the Virginia Beach area who might have rallied to the support of the college were not told the truth. The impression of a large, well-endowed school seemed to persist. The nature and number of the claims recorded in the bankruptcy proceedings suggest that there was no insistence upon the economy that was so urgently needed if the University was to be a successful local endeavor. The problems facing the administration of the University after losing its financial backers were first, what educational philosophy will best satisfy the educational needs of the Norfolk area, and how best may the school operate consistently with this philosophy? Second, how can the people of the community and the students of the college be made to realize that the philosophy of the University meets the needs of the area? Instead of facing the problems, the administration persisted in embracing a philosophy which aimed at pretentiousness and idealism. There was no evidence of practical planning in relation to these aims.

Atlantic University might have continued to exist if the philosophy of meeting the needs of the local commu-
nity and students had been practically administered. This meant the school needed economical administration, student support, faculty support, and community support. Actually there was no economy, confused student and faculty support, and only slight community support. A great deal of this confused thinking and confused activity seems to be traceable to the confused philosophy, the inconsistent application of the early philosophy, and the ignorance of all parties save the administration of the true purposes and aims of the school.

On the evidence available it appears that the operation of the school had little relation to the stated aims and philosophy. It appears also that there was no understanding by the parties involved of the administrative practices. Finally, when it became necessary to make the University a local endeavor, a philosophy based upon local needs and resources was not adapted, nor were efforts made to make understandable to the community the actual, pretentious objectives of the school.

_The administration of Atlantic University compared to Criterion #3: a well-administered school seeks to meet the needs of the community and the students it serves._

The question of how well Atlantic University met the needs of the community it served cannot be answered scientifically at this late date. In order to answer this
question accurately it would be necessary to make a survey as of the time at which the University started. This, of course, is impossible and an estimate of the situation must be made subjectively, using such data as are available.

In 1930 the Norfolk area was well-populated and needed a college, but, the apparent need was for a junior college rather than a great university. This the University recognized when in its initial announcements it indicated that it planned to concentrate on the work of the freshman and sophomore years. Virginia was well supplied with existing higher educational institutions. Moreover, most of the juniors and the seniors in the area were already in colleges and were not willing to transfer. This is evident from the disproportionately small size of the junior, senior, and graduate student body at Atlantic University. Thus, it appears that provisions for freshman and sophomore classes would have met the higher educational needs of the area for two years at least.

In addition, there was no demonstrated indication that the Norfolk area needed a graduate school or a school of optometry. Had the administration eliminated the last two years of the college and the graduate school, the student body would have decreased by only eighteen members.

70 Supra, p. 51, lines 3-7.
One of these eighteen persons was the only student in the school of optometry. The number of classes that the University offered would have been lessened considerably. There would have been a large decrease in the size of the faculty and a proportionately large reduction in expenses. Atlantic University did meet some of the needs of the Norfolk area, but events appear to indicate that it went too far in providing for the imaginary needs of a group that did not exist.

Although Atlantic University failed to meet the needs of the community it served, it would have been possible, nevertheless, to meet certain needs of the students enrolled. The view is held by many educators that a curriculum which contributes to the adjustment of the whole student personality is the best means of meeting the needs of the student of any university. How well did the curriculum of Atlantic University meet these total needs?

To the modern educator the student's personality is never departmentalized. What affects the mind affects the body, and there is some indication that the strong mind and strong body go together. Instincts, attitudes, mind,

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71 Atlantic Log (Student Publication, Virginia Beach, Virginia), October 21, 1930.
and body are treated as a unity. However, men become experts and specialists in given fields of knowledge. Instruction in higher educational institutions has tended to follow this specialization, and instruction in schools has been departmentalized.

It becomes necessary, therefore, to appraise the way in which instruction is offered in relation to student needs. For this purpose the writer has chosen five of many possible categories in order to determine the adequacy of Atlantic University's curriculum in meeting student needs. These five categories are: (1) use of language; (2) health and recreation; (3) occupational preparation; (4) social activities; (5) brotherhood of human race. In attempting to meet the needs of the students in these categories Atlantic University offered the following program:

(1) The University attempted to establish a curriculum that would teach the students to use well the English language, both written and oral. Not only was English taught with some emphasis on creative writing, but classes were offered in public speaking, dramatics, and poetic

readings.  

(2) Atlantic University's curriculum stressed the importance of health and physical activity. There were health classes and classes in physical education as well as intramural games for both men and women. All students, both men and women were required to take the health and physical education classes. The stated objective of health classes was to inculcate good health habits and knowledge of the principles of healthy living. Physical education included the games of high and low organization, calisthenics, folk-dancing, and so forth. There was, however, the difficulty of finding a suitable gymnasium and playing field. The football team had to go two miles to practise, while the basketball team used a high school gymnasium three miles away. Many things were lacking in the health and physical education program. The deficiencies, however, appeared to be due to the general lack of funds and facilities and not to the conception of the program.

(3) Atlantic University sought to prepare its students for occupational competency to the same extent as in many other liberal arts colleges. No trade courses were offered.

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74 Atlantic University Bulletin, Catalogue and Announcements, 1931-32 (Virginia Beach, Virginia, August 1931; Volume II, #1), pp. 81-84.

75 Ibid., p. 95.
No professional courses were offered except optometry. During the first year of the school's existence, a counselor was employed whose responsibility it was to counsel with students concerning vocational problems and aptitudes. However, there was no obligation for students to consult the counselor. It appears that by reason of the fact that the institution was concerned, primarily, with the liberal arts, vocational training, per se, was not a primary concern of the administration.

(4) The program of Atlantic University provided social activities for all of the students. Clubs, extra curricular activities, dancing, parties, and social gatherings were encouraged. The students ate together in the dining hall located in the hotel building and each night after dinner the large hotel lobby provided a place for excellent social contacts.  

(5) Atlantic University may have been ahead of its time in attempting to prepare the students for the brotherhood of man. More and more it has become evident that this is one world and that all men and all nations must cooperate. Frontiers are still in existence, and national governments still promote nationalism. However, the atomic bomb and

76 Atlantic University Bulletin, Preliminary Announcements (Virginia Beach, Virginia, August 1930, Volume I, #3), p. 11.

77 Supra, pp. 30-31.
rapid communications are helping men to realize that people of the world must live in peace or run the risk of being annihilated. The brotherhood of man becomes more than a dream; it has begun to be a necessity.

The curriculum at Atlantic University was forward-looking in this respect. The statement of aims, the positive policy of including foreign students in the student body would appear to indicate that systematic efforts were made to develop tolerance in the attitude of the faculty and the students toward students who were of a different religion, national, or racial background. Many of the courses that were taught in philosophy and sociology stressed the unity of the human race, and there was much social fellowship in the comparatively small student body. The curriculum at Atlantic University took into consideration the great unifying force of Christianity and other great religions, the brotherhood of man.

The administration of Atlantic University compared to Criterion #4: a well-administered school is student centered, and administration is recognized as a means to the end of improved student instruction.

The administration of Atlantic University appeared

78 Atlantic University Bulletin, Catalog and Announcements 1931-32, op. cit., p. 91 and 104.

79 Ibid., pp. 93-94.
to make an intense effort to establish and maintain the instructional process at a high level. The most important part of this instructional process is the part contributed by the teacher in classroom instruction. One may judge from the qualifications of the faculty members which were employed that the administration made every effort to secure an efficient and a competent faculty. Moreover, the present subjective judgment of the investigator is that the faculty members with whom he came in contact as a student were of high professional ability. This indicates that the administration was well aware of, and endeavored to maintain this aspect of the instructional program.

Not only did the administration employ an efficient faculty, but it endeavored, also, to institute modern educational practices. The administration not only stated the objective of educating the whole student, it made certain specific arrangements to such an end. An expert in the field of guidance was employed and given faculty rank. At the time, this was unusual for a school no larger than Atlantic University. Furthermore, the statement of educational policy emphasized functional learning and active rather than passive participation by the student in his own

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60 Supra, pp. 28-29.
learning experience. 81

That aspect of the instructional process dependent upon environment, physical equipment and plant, was poorly provided for. Buildings were makeshift and classrooms were inadequately equipped. The buildings were too far apart for the most effective organization of classes and tardinesses to class were more frequent than in most schools because of this distance. 82 These inadequacies appear to have been distinctly detrimental to the instructional process.

It is apparent that the high level of instruction at which the administration aimed was not maintained throughout the life of the school. The insecurity felt by the faculty members because of non-payment of salaries, and the general feeling of uncertainty concerning the continuance of the school had its demoralizing effect which was reflected in less efficient instruction.

A student-centered school provides for the welfare of each individual student. The administration of Atlantic University attempted, in many instances, to make it a student-centered school. The aims of the University as pro-

82 Supra, pp. 29-30.
83 Ibid., p. 30.
claimed in the charter and in the college catalogue were stated in terms of serving students. The large size of the faculty as compared with the size of the student body, the guidance and counselling service offered are indicative of the administration's desire to center the college's program on the student.

Social activities were provided for the students as were physical and spiritual activities. The faculty in addition to the administration was always willing to make curricular adjustments for the benefit of an individual student if the student could show that such consideration would further his education. Such a policy was in keeping with the avowed purpose of the school in respect to the philosophical statement that it was the University's aim to help each individual discover that area in which he or she could best serve humanity.

The administration of Atlantic University compared to Criterion #5: A well-administered school makes provision for adequate financial support from endowment, taxation, or operational revenue.

There have been many rumors relative to what the

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84 Atlantic University Bulletin, Preliminary Announcements 1930-31, op. cit., p. 43.
Atlantic University Bulletin, Catalog and Announcements 1931-32, op. cit., p. 60.
board of trustees advised the University's administration concerning the amount of money available for the school. It is impossible for the writer to find the actual directive given to the administration by the board of trustees in regard to finance. In view of the conflicting impressions the finances of the University will be discussed, therefore, from two points of view. The first point of view assumes that the first board of trustees asked the administration to found a great university - a university in which expense was not to be spared. The second point of view is that in which the board expected moderation, and the administration, on its own initiative, overstepped its bounds and went beyond its jurisdiction in all things relative to finance.

If the board of trustees directed the administration to create a great university, the College Shop, football team, the large number of administrative personnel, the orchestra, and the expensive faculty might be considered initial investments in a great enterprise. If these instructions had been given to the administration by the board of trustees, the administration made a great error when it allowed the board to resign and be released from the heavy obligations occasioned by the founding of a large university upon the meagre payment of $60,000.85

85 Supra, pp. 32-33.
It should be noted here that the decision to continue the University after October 11th, 1930, was that of the administration. It is possible that the administration expected money from other sources, but the responsibility for continuing the University must be placed upon the administration.

On the other hand, if the board of trustees had expected moderation in expenditures and the administration spent immoderate amounts of money on its own initiative, it was a serious administrative error.

In either case, the administration must be considered as failing to practice the principle that a well-administered school must be well-financed.

The record of financial transactions of the University as revealed in the bankruptcy proceedings, suggests that the financial policy of the institution was not clearly defined and understood by the administration, or if defined and understood by the administration that adequate controls of expenditures were not maintained. In either case accepted business practice would have been violated.

After the contract of October 11th, at which time the board members who had started the University were able to avoid their obligations, the need for economy certainly was real. Economy was necessary in order to put the University in a favorable light to potential local financial
backers. In addition, simple justice demanded that professors who had left good positions deserved as much of their salaries as could be realized by means of economy in all the University's operations. The only way the administration could have achieved such economy would have been to make an accurate estimate of expected income and to build a budget thereon. With no new revenue expected, the way to balance such a budget would have been to economize in the number of employees, salaries, and housing.

The administration apparently did not deal effectively with the need to economize in its operations. The number of people employed by the University steadily increased, and it was December 26, 1930 before an effort was made to reduce salaries. The extravagant housing of the University did not change to something less extravagant until the beginning of the second semester, 1931. The people of the area were not informed of the financial status of the University immediately in order that they might rally to its support.

The financial administration of Atlantic University can be compared with that of similar institutions. The average cost per student in thirty-two accredited colleges

86 Supra, p. 35.
87 Supra, p. 35.
88 Supra, p. 34.
was $266 in 1926. In 1930-31 the cost of educating a student at Atlantic University was approximately $800. Even if due allowance be made for possible increase in costs between 1926 and 1930 and the high per capita cost characteristic of small enrollments be taken into account, the impression remains that Atlantic University represented an unusually expensive operation.

The foregoing discussion leads one to conclude that Atlantic University was not well-financed. Moreover, the poor financing resulted from the violation by the administration of basic administrative principles: there appeared to be no consistent financial controls. If a budget existed, it was not followed or was poorly conceived and was relatively extravagant.

The administration of Atlantic University compared to Criterion #5: a well-administered school makes provision for good public relations.

The opinion of the public concerning educational institutions ordinarily is affected in two ways; first, by means of systematic publicity originated by the institution itself, and second, by the impressions acquired by people coming in contact with the institution.

In the former category, planned publicity, Atlantic

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University published its catalogues and provided newspaper articles and bulletins. These appear to be similar to comparable materials issued by other colleges. Public speeches made by the administrative staff and the faculty were designed to give the public a favorable impression of the work of Atlantic University.

The orchestra and the football team brought the name of the University before the public on many occasions. Yet at times some of the members of both of these organizations were guilty of activity which detracted from the public's opinion of the school.

In instances of the latter type, the people who came in contact with Atlantic University were not always favorably impressed. Consequently, the adverse public opinion which resulted was detrimental to the institution. The number of people who were agents for good will appeared to decrease as the evidence of poor organization, lax financial administration, and confusion increased.

One may conclude that part of the public relations program served to enhance the public's opinion of the University. However, part of the program served to bring poor

90 Supra, p. 30.
91 Supra, p. 34.
92 Supra, pp. 34-36.
opinion and ridicule. The reason for this seems to have been the superficiality of the program in relying too heavily upon a football team and dance orchestra as agents of good will for an institution of higher learning.

The public relations program which has a lasting effect is the program that systematically interprets important aspects of the aims and content of the school's program. Atlantic University's public relations program apparently did not succeed in doing this.