

Institute of Religious Studies  
September 24, 1977

HENRY W. OFFEN  
DEAN, RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

Dear Henry:

I have had occasion to reflect on future organizational choices for the Institute since my meeting yesterday with Gary and Marty. I am outlining the procedures I think best.

First, I believe the time has come to alter the basic operating assumption. When I became Institute director, I intended to build a broadly-based organized research center which would support an ongoing series of lectures, conferences, and publications, and would secure its fair share of extra-mural grant monies in accordance with its major purpose: to encourage, support, and help guide the development of religious studies in American higher education, and particularly within the state-supported university. This is what we set out to do, and we were conscious that our undertaking here on this campus possessed intrinsic relationships with the establishment of religious studies as a worthy and certifiable area of scholarly inquiry.

I assumed, when I began, that our chief limitation was sustaining monies. Our present S&E allocation is \$ 2,701, and this constitutes the total sum of operational money (exclusive of salaries) that the parent institution provides. Consequently, I concentrated my early efforts -- indeed, to the present time -- on attracting basic support funds. And I reasoned that the only way we could do this was by demonstrating that we had already initiated something worthy of sustenance. Thus, as we tried to expand the support base and increase fundamental resources, we also established a rather significant number of projects and activities, which included lecture series, conferences, symposia series, a significant number of collections of scholarly essays (four of which have already been published, and three more of which are in process of completion). It was my hope, too, that the University, recognizing the value of the Institute (to the campus, other campuses, the University, as well as to the ongoing development of the academic field), might increase its own contribution to the general support of the undertaking.

This has not happened. Outside sustaining monies have not been found in significant portions. If either had occurred, the other might have followed. As a result, I have become very discouraged, not to say disappointed, because we work now in a state of rather significant over-extension. We simply have more projects and events under the Institute's sponsorship than we have any right to. And, at the same time, we live constantly under the nagging pressure of having had only modest success in the extra-mural funding area.

I believe we have come to the point of significant decision. In the first place, I know it is unrealistic to expect that the

University will increase its level of operational support. And I know it is unrealistic to expect that the operational deficiency can be made up through sustaining monies from the outside. Further, inflation and increased costs make it impossible for the Institute to continue its program of events according to its projected schedule. And, to make the situation more complicated, there is a very real need on the campus for a humanities center as well as for deliberate institutional mechanisms for increasing the extra-mural support base in the humanities.

I think it time to announce that the party is over, and that we are being governed by another principle: that whatever symposia, conferences, and lecture series the Institute seeks to sponsor must be part of extra-murally funded research projects and funded from those sources. There is precedent, of course: the two large grants the Institute has received, one from the Lilly Endowment and the other from the National Endowment for the Humanities, both included a conference component. This will mean a large decrease in numbers of scheduled events, at least at first, and it will alter colleagues' expectations regarding the services the Institute provides. But some of the slack can be picked up by the various departments involved, and some by the Committee on Arts and Lectures.

Then I think it necessary to include the humanities component alongside the religious studies, perhaps as two centers of focus within one and the same operation. This will require a name change soon. I still think the following one best: Institute of Religious Studies and Center for the Humanities. And the S&E monies can be used as they were intended, to make it possible to have an office to encourage and assist research projects in religious studies and the humanities.

In other words, I am conceding that the original formula or model has had sufficient opportunity to prove itself. The time has come to create a more compelling strategy. But before conceding it altogether, I want to observe that the new strategy would not have worked at any time had the subject area been religious studies exclusively.

To ease the transition, I am making the following recommendations:

- (1) that everything Gary suggested be done; this includes a letter of announcement to the humanities faculty that the changeover is occurring, the Institute is being equipped to provide these services, that Marty be hired to work in the same area for the three-month trial period, and that we schedule some faculty workshops (as Jerry Bradford has been preparing to do) during the fall quarter.

- (2) that the letter include some reference to the fact that a change of name is being considered; the proposed name can be included in the letter; and the very announcement ought to be sufficient formal mandate (if only temporary) to enable the work to begin.
- (3) that the relationship with the Council on the Study of Religion not be affected by the change; this association is good for the campus, I believe, and serves to strengthen the reputation of its program in religious studies.
- (4) that the remainder of the 1977-78 academic year be devoted to completing the current projects of the Institute; the principle is that no new ones will be initiated unless accompanied by an adequate support base.

There are also some attendant personnel changes, as follows: Jerry Bradford will share responsibility with me for bringing current Institute projects to completion; Deborah Sills will be shifted to the Council on the Study of Religion half-time secretarial position (a move made appropriate not only by the changes I have outlined, but by the large volume of CSR work); we will need to hire a new administrative assistant in the Institute and the Center, to be appointed not later than December 15, 1977.

You can be certain that I will continue to carry primary responsibility for those projects in which I am principal investigator. These are the projects on "The Influence of Religious Studies upon Religion" (funded by Lilly) and the "Research Needs Inventory" (funded by NEH).

The small balance in the Laucks Lectures account will be devoted to a year-long study project on "The Vietnam War and Modern Religious Sensibility", portions of which will be co-sponsored by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions.

The other necessary transitional steps can be worked out as we proceed.

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