To the Board of Directors
of the University of Cincinnati:

"Respice, Adspice, Prospice"

The academic year 1969-1970 at UC began well and appeared to be heading for a productive close -- until the early part of May. Then, the type of disruptive difficulty that had beset other campuses also came to the University of Cincinnati.

Even during the relatively quiet months, there were those -- chiefly from the East Coast and Chicago -- who regularly visited Cincinnati and tried to "awaken" what they regarded as an apathetic campus. For a long time they and a small number of local radicals were unsuccessful in stirring up major trouble. For this there were several reasons.

First, the great majority of campus elements was interested in constructive study and not in destructive activism. Secondly, the administrators and faculty in general were receptive to the idea of reasonable student involvement in the formulation and carrying out of the University's educational objectives. Thirdly, the limited numbers of white militants and black militants found little of common interest.

During the period of relative local quiet, the public and the parents of students appeared to be only mildly concerned with what was happening, violently and in pattern form, on hundreds of other campuses throughout the land. Many parents were blind to the effects of their failure to have taught their children moral values and patriotism. The public was allowing all three branches of the federal government to become ever more permissive of wrong-doing. By early 1970, indeed, it seemed virtually impossible to get swift and effective punishment of those who might be charged with any disruptive offenses, from trespassing to arson. At the same time, those who fostered turmoil generally were well trained in the strategy of exploiting the emotion of intelligent though inexperienced young people, of avoiding arrest, and of delaying or foiling conviction.

A new phase in these developments came to Cincinnati with this spring's events in Cambodia, at Kent State University, and Jackson State College. At UC, these events aroused many hitherto non-activist students. Literally overnight they, and some faculty, reacted emotionally and succumbed to the activist call of a temporary alliance between white militants and black militants. And this was grist to the mill of the local and visiting revolutionaries who, with trained alacrity and without clearly violating the law, turned trouble into turmoil.
The agitators then, with practiced speed, placed the administrators and Board under the heavy pressure of potential bloodshed and property destruction. These officials knew, too, that wherever external force had been used, the climate for further study by any students had been destroyed. Finally, they also were aware that a decision to open the University would please many who advocated a "firm stand," but would please even more the demonstrators who were seeking further opportunity for destruction and turmoil.

The Board and President knew that a decision to call in the city police, who then, as the Safety Director indicated, would have to call on the National Guard, would be hailed as courageous by many citizens. It therefore actually required great moral courage to make the unpopular decision.

Basically, only those who were not involved directly in the events on campus could regard the action as weak. Similarly, it is chiefly those who still are unaware that today's campus turmoil is, in its leadership, one manifestation of an ongoing national revolution, who can look on the decision as appeasement. Finally, it seems somewhat inappropriate for those who thus far have done little to urge their government to enforce the laws against agitators to complain because administrators and board members are not serving as law enforcement authorities.

The emergency closing action pulled the proverbial rug from under the demonstrators. It preserved the lives and property that were entrusted to the institution by parents and taxpayers. It has opened the way, without fire and death, to the early restoration on campus of an atmosphere conducive permanently to teaching and study on a university level. And it makes possible now the awakening of the public a) to the legitimate concerns of today's youth, and b) to its own essential role in helping to produce a social and intellectual climate that will enhance, not overturn, the American way of life.

More specifically, it must be realized off campus as well as on campus that today's college students in general are more knowledgeable, more concerned about people, less spiritually inclined, and less patient with tradition than were their predecessors of the previous generation. Today's collegian is not satisfied to accept as an answer to questioning such brush-offs as "take it as it is or leave." And this new attitude, if understood and channeled constructively, can mean much to future American greatness.

But this constructive channeling cannot merely be passed on to universities. It requires a base of home emphasis on moral values and religious principles, and governmental emphasis on swift and just law enforcement. It requires realistic recognition by all that merely maintaining order on campuses will not of itself stave off revolution. It requires community understanding of some of the problems inherent in the operation of universities that embrace scores of thousands of lively, intelligent, and restless young men and women -- many of whom learned at home to rebel against authority and take a casual attitude toward laws.
Hopefully, the public and government are becoming ready to consider national measures to preserve our country. Meanwhile, each university with its local community must address itself to the problems of: a) providing an atmosphere wherein violence is not likely to arise because of local reasons: b) finding a way to react wisely to external pressures and to overcome threats of violence if these do materialize; and c) developing mutual understanding and support of university and community.

With this objective in mind, I have directed each Dean to appoint a committee of his faculty and students to generate ideas and procedures associated with the beginning and effective continuation of the new academic year. Each committee is to consider not only matters of security but the creation and maintenance of a climate favorable to higher education. The reports of the committee are to be submitted to me by July 1, 1970.

A Presidential Task Force meanwhile will be appointed to consider public involvement and support, to study the reports of the college committees, and make specific recommendations to the President and Board. The Task Force will include civic, community, and religious leaders; administrators, faculty, and students; and alumni and parents. The chairmen of the several college committees will serve for consultant and resource purposes.

With such help, and with God's blessing, UC will be able to continue an uninterrupted pursuit of its educational objectives.

Respectfully submitted,

Walter C. Langsam
President