Chapter 2
The Collegial Tradition in Higher Education

Introduction

This chapter presents our descriptive overview of the collegial tradition in higher education. It is an interpretation that is heavily, although not exclusively, dependent upon an analysis of the two ancient English models of the university – the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which we see as representing two variants of the same model. However, this is not yet another dissection of the peculiar practices of Oxbridge. Collegial values have penetrated widely within many national systems of higher education and some would argue that the embracing of collegial values constitutes the essence of a university – that it is the embodiment of the idea of collegiality that distinguishes a university from an institution of higher education as simply a managed machine for teaching at the tertiary level.

The chapter, therefore, will examine the collegial tradition on a wider front than Oxbridge, and this breadth is strongly reinforced by the analysis pursued in subsequent chapters. There are several parts to this chapter. First, we will examine what we consider to be the core elements of collegiality, which are:

1. the federal structure of governance
2. donnish dominion
3. intellectual collegiality
4. commensality

Having analysed the collegial tradition in terms of these four significant constituent elements, the chapter will distil the core values that constitute the basis of these ingredients and compare and contrast their representation in the collegiate universities (Oxford and Cambridge) with practices in unitary models of the British university. The chapter will conclude with a limited reflection on whether there is indeed an inner core to the meaning of collegiality or can it be re-interpreted infinitely as it adjusts to changing circumstances? The issue is whether collegiality is a viable concept for the purposes of analysis.

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Collegiality: The Core Elements

The Collegiate University

Although the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge best represent our understanding of the collegiate university, it is important to remember that they are but powerful symbols of the university as a federal rather than a unitary structure. While this is a critical dimension to our understanding of Oxbridge, it is only one aspect of their embracing of the collegial tradition and, at least in the popular imagination as represented in literature and film, rarely features in any representation of the two universities.

In a powerful early attempt to initiate 'systematic historical inquiry' into 'the federal principle in higher education', Sheldon Rothblatt has written:

> By the 'federal principle' is meant the habit or practice of relating different segments of a higher education organization or system to some larger whole or centre. It is possible to dispose of the federal principle altogether and simply have a centre, or what is called a 'unitary' model, but the federal principle has features that, for historical and other reasons are considered desirable, have proven valuable, and are regarded as indispensable (Rothblatt, 1987: 151).

And Rothblatt goes on to argue that:

> The federal principle, the separation of functions and the academic division of labour, was Cambridge's gift to British higher education generally and to wherever the British model was exported (Rothblatt, 1987: 157).

As Rothblatt shows, the federal principle also underwrote the 1836 agreement that allowed University College and King's College to retain their separate identities while withholding their right to regulate examinations and award degrees; powers that were granted to a third body, the University of London. The contemporary analysts of the new public management mode of governance may want to examine this early example of state steering, which in fact has always been intrinsic to the relationship between society, state and higher education in Britain. Thus, examining was a public function regulated, albeit indirectly, by the state through the universities so leaving the colleges to sustain the daily affairs of the higher education enterprise.

Interestingly, like that most famous of all examples of federalism – the American polity – university federalism is also bounded by written constitutions (university and college statutes). But equally, statutes can be revoked, amended or simply re-interpreted over time in response to changing circumstances. Undoubtedly the collegiate model of the university, as represented by contemporary Oxford and Cambridge, owes its present form to changes that took place in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Rothblatt, 1968; Engel, 1983). The pressures for change were both internal and external. The outcome was the re-invigoration of the colleges in which teaching, under the control of college tutors, became central to the Oxbridge experience. Besides establishing academic careers for themselves, college dons created a model of learning that both reinforced a socio-moral code (the cult of 'the gentleman', muscular Christianity and the well-rounded scholar) and at the

same time enabled their graduates to compete effectively for entry into both the upper echelons of the burgeoning professional class and the administrative rank of the civil service.

Within this context the power of the centre, that is the university, also expanded. The university regulated the awarding of degrees, and in order to pursue professional careers or administrative posts in the public sector it was increasingly vital to have a university degree. Patronage was in decline; entry into prominent posts in both state and society was increasingly determined by bureaucratic procedures rather than the personal connections central to a system of patronage. Moreover, these changes occurred as new forms of knowledge, with their own degree programmes (the Natural Science Tripos – NST – at Cambridge and, albeit at a later date, Philosophy, Politics and Economics – PPE – at Oxford) penetrated higher education. Although colleges, especially at Oxford, did establish their own laboratories, the two universities steadily assumed the responsibility for providing much of the infrastructure for science teaching, including the faculty and support staff (this development came later to Oxford – in the inter-war years – and was dependent on public grants channelled through the University Grants Committee, UGC).

In his judgement on Oxford's response to its own commission of enquiry (the Franks Commission – University of Oxford, 1966), Halsey, Oxford's eminent in-house sociologist, concluded:

> Franks left the public life of Oxford as he found it, quietly led and controlled by the private life of its colleges. Thus Oxford continues to stand as a collegiate alternative to the normal professional and administrative hierarchy of university organisations in Britain and internationally (Halsey, 1992: 166).

This is not the context in which to examine the implementation (or perhaps non-implementation) of the recommendations of the Franks Commission, but rather we want to use Halsey's judgement to suggest different ways of interpreting the balance of power within the federal model.

Halsey is suggesting that although the Franks Commission led to important changes in the governance and administration of Oxford (most notably the extension of the vice chancellor's term of office from 2 to 4 years), the overall balance of power within the university remained in favour of the colleges. The implication of his argument is that rather than functioning as a collegiate university, Oxford was, and arguably still is, a confederation of colleges rather than a collegiate university. Or if this is too strong a judgement, it is a federation with a very weak centre and a strong periphery.

From the point of view of understanding developments in the federal model, the more interesting implications of Halsey's observations are that we have an essentially stable distribution of authority, and, moreover, any sophisticated analysis of change will need to look beyond the formal model to examine how it is steered by 'the private life of its colleges'. However, our interpretation of Rothblatt and Engel's research points to a model within which it is possible for both the centre and the periphery to enlarge their respective roles without necessarily impacting upon their

relative influence. But, of course, Rothblatt and Engel were dissecting the histories of Oxford and Cambridge during a 'revolutionary' period; the two universities were in the process of breaking the links with the Anglican Church and steadily establishing themselves as secular institutions committed to expanding knowledge through teaching and research (or at least the pursuit of scholarship).

Within that historical context the key issue was not so much the balance of power within the federal model but rather the purpose of the university. However, the re-invigoration of the colleges, with the development of significant roles for college tutors, was the most evident of changes. In effect there was a power struggle involving different interests, with the state also a very significant party to the process of change. The expansion of the centre appears to have occurred somewhat later, reflecting the intrusion of new areas of knowledge (the experimental sciences) and the expansion of university income, which was augmented post-1919 by the UGC's annual grant. No doubt Rothblatt's reference to 'the separation of teaching from examining within the federal university constitution' as the 'Cambridge principle' (Rothblatt, 1987: 156) in part reflects Cambridge's stronger centre, which was reinforced by the fact that the University appointed its own faculty (who would then acquire a college base) whereas at Oxford there were many joint appointments with faculty dividing (in differing ratios) their time between college and university commitments.

Although there were critical changes to both the ancient collegiate universities throughout the twentieth century, they do not compare with the redefinition of their very raison d'êtres that occurred in the latter half of the nineteenth century. We have seen an evolutionary process of change, which has not led to a fundamental redefinition of the purposes of colleges and university but rather has instigated a steady shift in their relationship. Oxford, notwithstanding the frustrated hopes of those who looked to the Franks Report for radical change, has moved steadily from a confederation of colleges to a collegiate university, while at Cambridge the role of the centre has remained firm but not without its critics.

It is important to point out that this interpretation of developments is dependent upon a longer time perspective than was available to Halsey when he arrived at his 'steady-as-you-go' judgement. In the next chapter we will examine the pressures that have led to this change. The point is that federal systems of governance can be viewed as both inherently stable and inherently fragile! They are fragile in the sense that at any one point in time they represent a particular accommodation of interests with the distinct possibility that the balance is likely to be challenged by those who believe they are not well-served by the status quo. Stable in the sense that the model can still prevail as it is restructured to accommodate, or rather re-accommodate, the interests of the differing parties. Naturally, with reference to the United States, one hopes that it will not take a civil war to secure a new balance within the federal model. Moreover, it is also important to look beyond changes to the formal constitution to see how practice has actually evolved on a daily basis. Halsey may well have reflected on the fact that, although American presidents may not have the constitutional power to declare war, that is what they – thankfully only intermittently – actually do. The question, therefore, is whether beyond the set piece

commissions of enquiry, which present snapshots at specific points in time, there are contextual changes that over decades steadily undermine the established equilibrium within the federal model.

The next chapter will look at those pressures that have impacted upon the federal models of university governance. An examination of the recent histories of Oxford and Cambridge would suggest, although it is a contested process, that there has been a steady increase in the power of the centre (the university) over the periphery (the colleges). But the federal model can be reshaped to permit a change in the balance of power that may go in the opposite direction, and it is important in this respect not to be unduly influenced by developments at Oxford and Cambridge. As we will see, the federal models of governance at both the Universities of London and Wales have been seriously eroded, with certain colleges establishing their independence at both London (Imperial College) and Wales (Cardiff University as it is now known). Interestingly it is precisely the same developments that have led to diametrically opposite reactions at Oxford and Cambridge, which is a perfect illustration of the point that pressures on the federal model act in ways that are dependent upon the particular institutional context.

The analysis of the federal model of governance has placed most of its focus upon the shifting relationship between the colleges and the university, but a critically important consideration is inter-collegiality, that is how the colleges organise their joint affairs. It is of importance because it impacts upon our understanding of collegiality. Are the colleges truly independent institutions? Or do they belong to a collegiate system in which they demonstrate their commitment to mutually supportive measures? And the answer is complex. Formally, the colleges are autonomous institutions with a legally defined corporate status. Indeed, this is the single most vital distinguishing characteristic of the ancient collegiate universities – their colleges are not mere creatures of the university but rather have a legal status in their own right as chartered eleemosynary corporations.

Although the colleges provide accommodation for students they are not mere halls of residence. Living in college, or so the myth would have us believe, means being entwined in a broad socialisation experience. But if the colleges were just independent corporations that provided a convivial residence for students (mainly undergraduates), although they might be more than halls of residence (perhaps upmarket hotels or holiday camps!), their role within the collegiate university would be decidedly marginal.

There are three key functions beyond ‘board and lodgings’ that the colleges perform:

1. They are responsible for teaching undergraduates, which means they hire and pay tutors (with – as we noted – a stronger college input in this respect at Oxford), and consequently provide some of the infrastructure that underwrites teaching and even research (financial support and appointing college research fellows). Moreover, much of the organisation of undergraduate teaching takes place at the collegial level.

2. They control the admission of undergraduate students. In spite of the attempts to encourage 'open' admissions applications, candidates still prefer to apply to colleges of their choice. Furthermore, both Cambridge and Oxford have admissions offices, which continue to be (for now) under the control of the colleges. Thus, they regulate the access of the junior members to the university.
3. In direct confirmation of the idea that there is an intercollegiate system in which the individual colleges offer mutual support, the more richly endowed colleges have provided through the college contribution schemes regular financial support for the more poorly endowed colleges. Moreover, there have been initiatives by individual colleges, most notably Cambridge's very richly endowed Trinity College, to provide financial support for particular poorer colleges.

It is impossible to determine precisely the extent to which these institutionalised measures of intercollegiate cooperation demonstrate that there is a flourishing model built upon mutual support. Colleges are committed to selecting their own students and, not surprisingly, within the present environment are determined to choose the most academically gifted – those who are most likely to ensure a high ranking in those tables (with Oxford's Norrington Table receiving far more publicity than Cambridge's Tompkins Table) that purport to measure and rank finals results by college. If to the outsider this may seem an unlikely scenario (Oxford attracts only academically gifted candidates), then the scramble in the 1970s of Oxford's men's college to admit women demonstrates otherwise. At a stroke you could widen your pool of gifted candidates, including sustaining demand from those male applicants who prefer to reside in mixed colleges (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2000: 87–89).

The tensions over endowment income also bubble to the surface from time to time. Are endowments the property of an individual college to be used as its fellows determine within the terms of the endowment? Legally undoubtedly so, but is it nonetheless poor practice with potentially dubious outcomes? Have the college contribution schemes served as a convenient sop to the poorer colleges, which undermines the internal political push to pool endowment income? Of course there is the critical counter-argument that college endowments are essentially the gift of grateful college alumni, who are donating to *their* college and *not* to support a fanciful notion of the collegiate system and its collective strength.

The organisation of teaching represents the most entrenched example of intercollegiate cooperation. This goes back to the nineteenth century 'revolution' and was part and parcel of the manoeuvring to place the teaching of undergraduates firmly under the control of the colleges. It was critical that if a college lacked tutors who had the academic expertise to teach some of its undergraduates, then it could turn to other colleges to fill the void. This both kept the students within the collegiate teaching structure and built up intercollegiate ties by establishing mutual obligations. Inevitably this required organisation through a committee of college representatives who knew the teaching expertise of their college teaching fellows, the weight of their commitments, and who were prepared to keep the tally of credits and deficits and so bargain accordingly.

This is a clear picture, therefore, of an extensive intercollegiate structure of governance that runs in parallel with the federal model, which is dependent upon the interaction of colleges and university. Moreover, it extends back over a considerable period of time, calls for a measure of administrative sophistication, can function in part only because there are supportive bureaucratic structures and – for the most part – appears to have operated reasonably effectively, although clearly being incapable of satisfying the policy goals of all the interested parties.

But this picture of competence and continuity runs up against the fact that this is piecemeal inter-collegiality that evolves around discrete areas of cooperation. It is not a system of governance but rather a number of pacts and deals designed to reconcile competing interests (especially with respect to admissions and the college contribution schemes) – less indicative of a system, more a recognition of the need to express mutual interests or define pragmatic responses to the pressures for change. Halsey's judgement on Oxford's response to the Franks Report was very dependent upon its failure to persuade the colleges to create a 'Council of Colleges' as a forum for determining common policy positions. The Report intended the Council to be a body composed of college representatives who would both discuss the key policy issues of the day and through a process of binding votes determine an agreed course of action. The outcome, however, was the creation of a Conference of Colleges, which would debate the pertinent issues, certainly reveal the spread of college positions but would not have the authority to bind individual colleges. It was, but now less so, as Alan Bullock, Oxford's first post-Franks vice chancellor, was scathingly to call it, 'a mere talking-shop'. However, the failure to achieve a centralised intercollegiate system of governance does not mean that the Franks Report failed to shift the balance within the federal model between university and colleges, if not decisively, then at least markedly.

The essence therefore of the collegiate university is the federal model of governance. But does it follow that within itself this is a sufficient ingredient for us to label federal universities as embodying collegiality? If not, then what other qualities are required? Moreover, is it possible for federal universities to be non-collegial in character?

Donnish Dominion

Judgements will vary, but in our opinion Halsey's phrase 'donnish dominion' is an elegant description of the ideas we are attempting to convey in this section of the chapter (Halsey, 1992). Besides elegance it has the virtue of not being too detailed a description of institutional practices because when the affairs of higher education are under the microscope they are open to subtly different interpretations. To put the point perhaps too baldly, higher education institutions are composed of a range of both competing and co-operating interests, and donnish dominion is an interpretation of the extent to which the affairs of those institutions are controlled by their academic faculty.

In its most pure form, some would say its most maverick manifestation, donnish dominion is to be found in the collegiate universities. Contemporarily there are intense struggles to restructure the membership of the executive bodies of the two universities (Oxford's and Cambridge's Councils), which centre on the drive to impose a majority lay membership. At present the respective legislatures of the two universities, the Regent House (Cambridge) and Congregation (Oxford), still retain the potential authority to frustrate the wishes of their respective executives. And at the collegiate level, even if they should delegate their authority, the governance of colleges remains constitutionally in the hands of their fellows. The perception is that these – both university and colleges – are institutions, which are governed from below: equal rights and obligations for members, traditionally a leadership that seeks consensus rather than presents an unequivocal way forward, governance by committee and a significant reliance on key individuals who serve on more than one committee (the overlapping membership) or are rotated steadily through the committee system.

To express the matter positively, it is a mode of governance that is dependent upon the active commitment of all the governed – the exalted and the lowly, and new arrivals as well as those who are deeply entrenched. This is a markedly different mode of governance from all other British universities, including the two federal universities of London and Wales. The executive bodies of British universities invariably have a predominance of lay members, and they are certainly not constrained by what is in effect a legislative body composed of the massed ranks of the assembled members of the university.

But, nonetheless, there is a powerful commitment in the British tradition of higher education to the belief that the academic mission of the universities – what is taught and researched, and how it is taught and researched – should be under academic control. This has meant that ultimate responsibility for such matters invariably resides in a Senate dominated by the institution's academic members, although not necessarily equally representative of all ranks given the tendency for professors to dominate. If Senates symbolise the idea that the faculty should control the conduct of the university's academic mission, it is usually within departments that this principle finds its most collegial expression. Undoubtedly this is a legacy of the potent idea that teaching, especially for undergraduates, needs to be organised collegially if it is to function meaningfully. It is at the departmental level that degrees will be defined, courses prescribed, teaching loads organised and examinations set and marked. These have been seen as the collective responsibility of departmental faculty and they cannot – so the argument would run – be undertaken without a collegial input for they need to belong to the department as a whole. In spite of the counter-pressures that have emerged, this is an idea that still retains considerable support as an ideal and in practice. Of course, the deference to rank that prevails in the composition of most Senates can also prevail within departments, but these are confined arenas with more persistent and closer interaction between their members coupled with a more intense level of mutual need. In such circumstances collegiality

may not simply be a traditional modus operandi but an absolute necessity, although as we will discuss in Chapter 6, the future of the departmentally organised university is far from certain.

By definition donnish dominion means that other interests within the university have secondary roles to play in the formation of policy. But, as any policy analyst will tell you, the gap between policy formation and policy implementation is often relatively narrow. The implementation of policy is invariably administratively controlled and policy innovation in higher education is often dependent upon the advice and information that administrators provide.

Within British higher education, and more particularly the ancient collegiate universities, donnish dominion was sustained by both ideas and practices that undermined the potential challenge of the administrative cadre. As was the case with civil servants in their relationship to government ministers, the university administrative class was caste in a service role – to ensure that policy was implemented, information provided and advice given – and no more than that. Second, collegial values were traditionally perceived as hostile to the idea of the administrative expert. In the words of Merton College's evidence to the Franks Commission: 'Education in general and university education *par excellence* are worlds in which the university administrator should be kept in his place' (University of Oxford, 1965, Part 13: 35). University administration was seen as a role that the gifted amateur, the average don, could perform with relative ease. Consequently the commanding heights of the administrative machine were manned not by career bureaucrats but by dons, sometimes pressed into service. To add salt to the wound there was a tradition of short-term appointments as the dons scurried back to their colleges or labs, or perhaps moved into another top-level administrative post as the jobs circulated within the magic inner circle. Most decidedly this is a world that is fading rapidly. There may well be an increase in the interchange of academic and professional roles, but the greatly increased specialisation of both career lines ensures that changing tracks invariably means a permanent move (Whitchurch & Gordon, 2009).

If you believe that an integral component of the collegial tradition is the idea and practice of donnish dominion, then it is difficult to sustain the argument that a federal structure within itself is the hallmark of collegiality. But this is not a world of absolutes for the issue is how deeply entrenched donnish dominion has to be before it can be said that collegiality thrives. It could be argued that control of the academic purposes of the university – the fulfilment of its mission for teaching and research – is a sufficient remit for donnish dominion and that the university is more likely to thrive if a focussed donnish dominion is combined with a strong, independent executive that has a leaven of (perhaps even a majority of) external members. But this is to separate how the university mission is defined from how it is fulfilled. If academics lose control of the former (and there are – as we will see – numerous external pressures for change in addition to the evolving internal institutional distribution of authority), then not only is donnish dominion in decline but perhaps the collegial tradition also becomes a hollow concept.

Intellectual Collegiality

One of the periodic claims that is made for colleges is that, given the broad academic interests of their fellows, they act as a natural stimulant for the pursuit of interdisciplinary research. To give but one recent example:

> One of the great benefits of Oxford colleges is that they offer opportunities for effortless multi-disciplinary interactions. You don't have to make an appointment to meet someone or organise a conference. You just go to lunch and know that colleagues from different disciplines will be there (Stamp Dawkins, 2006: 6).

Concluding with what is almost a rallying cry:

> They (the colleges) contribute educationally, intellectually and financially and, as the Somerville experience shows, they can bring people together in multidisciplinary interactions that other universities can only envy. But we do need to say so (Stamp Dawkins, 2006: 7).

While there is the possibility of such intellectual interactions, which result in interesting interdisciplinary research, it is difficult to pin down with any degree of precision how common an occurrence this is. One suspects that lunchtime conversation for the most part gravitates around the personal trials and tribulations of the day, especially if the weather should be inclement.

But this is not to deny the importance of intellectual collegiality on both the teaching and research fronts, but to insist that it has a broader base than colleges and a wider remit than interdisciplinary research. The intellectual focus for many, if not most, academics will be expressed within their departments and laboratories. There is an enormous quantity of collaborative research and the publications of many academics bear the imprint of some of their colleagues, including jointly published work. There may still be lonely scholars who spend most of their time in their garrets labouring to produce the great work, but one can confidently say that these are the significant exceptions. If you define intellectual collegiality broadly as a process of interaction amongst academics that focuses upon their research and teaching, then it is indeed the very lifeblood of the profession. Much research, in the sciences and increasingly in the social sciences, is dependent upon the work of research teams, which are likely to be led by senior academics with known research records (often professors) who have headed the bid to obtain funding. In this context we are not thinking of collegiality as a process that involves the participation of equals with equal voices. But we are thinking of factors such as cooperation in the achieving of shared goals, a recognition of the significance of all inputs and mutual respect across the team – in short professional teamwork. Indeed this may be a stronger expression of collegiality than is found in some colleges, which can be rent with bitterness and mutual recrimination rather than infused with collegiality.

Understandably, in terms of research, intellectual collegiality has focused on the research process itself – idealised as a pattern of collaboration amongst equals who have mutual respect. However, perhaps an equally important part of that process is the requirement of openness – transparency in conducting research and broad

access to its findings. So, integral to this interpretation of intellectual collegiality is an understanding of the social purposes of research – to inform both the wider intellectual community and also its availability to the public at large. Collegiality, therefore, is about enhancing the educative process at large and not simply an observation on how academics relate to each other.

The discussion of intellectual collegiality has tended to focus on how interdisciplinary research is encouraged within the collegiate universities. We have attempted to broaden that understanding while retaining the focus on research. The research process inevitably involves intellectual interaction between members of faculty. It is possible, however, to interpret intellectual collegiality in relation to teaching as a particular understanding of the relationship between tutors and students within the learning process. The Oxbridge colleges are noted for their tradition of tutorial teaching embodied within the strong commitment to undergraduate education (Palfreyman, 2008). However, even within Oxbridge, courses taught by the weekly tutorial composed of the tutor and one undergraduate have all but disappeared. But a number of practices have been retained that are sufficiently distinctive to suggest a mode of teaching that can be described as collegial in character. Tutorials remain small in size, invariably conform to a weekly schedule, students are required to attend, the focus of the tutorial is the student's written essay or its equivalent, and it is this that guides the discussion. The tutor may lead but the expectation is that tutors and students are engaged in an interactive process of analysis. It can be best described as a liberal education defined by the process of learning rather than by the label of the academic discipline that brings the parties together.

Thanks to the fact that it is historically ingrained in Oxbridge, tutorial teaching is seen as one of the continuing hallmarks of the collegiate universities. But, at least prior to the arrival of mass higher education, aspects of the tradition had penetrated British higher education very widely – small group teaching, a Socratic pedagogy, regular written work (and not work submitted simply as part of the examination schedule) and the idea of an integrated degree course with examinations at the end of each academic year and with 'finals' at the end of the degree course. The intense pressure upon resources, coupled with the drive for greater research output, has resulted in the serious erosion of such commitments, but it is still widely perceived as an ideal, a tradition that gave British higher education a particular value.

Our analysis of intellectual collegiality has a more fragile basis than our examination of either the collegiate university or the concept of donnish dominion. Partly it is the difficulty of finding substantive empirical evidence to corroborate the assertion that the collegiate universities make a unique contribution to intellectual collegiality. We have lots of interesting, if random, examples but little proof. We have sought, therefore, to identify aspects of the academic character of higher education that could be labelled as intellectual collegiality, drawing our examples from both research and teaching, and thus in the process expanding the idea of the collegial tradition.

Commensality

Halsey uses the esoteric concept of commensality to conjure up an image of the social life of the collegiate universities. Higher education has always been about more than the transmission, acquisition and augmenting of knowledge. It is also a social process that unfolds in an institutional framework enveloping both faculty and students, and it is this process that shapes commensality, that is the means by which a sense of community and long-term institutional loyalty is created.

For students, residence in an Oxbridge college is a socialisation process built upon the close proximity of living space, shared dining facilities, college tutorials, participation in governance and a veritable plethora of sporting, social and cultural activities. There may be no longer compulsory daily attendance at chapel but services are still held and college choirs sing regularly. For faculty, few are now actually resident in college but there are offices to be filled, tutorials to give, dining rights, the opportunity to participate in college governance and, for the especially exalted, plaques and portraits for the deceased and the departed. And, of course, both tutors and students, accompanied by distinguished college alumni, will have the opportunity to participate together in the commemoration of special college historical landmarks – the gaudies as they are known.

The extent to which undergraduates and tutors will want to be embraced by the college will vary – some may have alternative bases to which they show stronger allegiance. And for others the ties to college may be essentially instrumental rather than reflecting a deep-seated loyalty. However, when it comes to establishing commensality the colleges have certain in-built advantages over university institutions. The variables that encourage commensality within the colleges are an intrinsic part of their character, embedded in the way in which they function. Laboratories, research institutes and departments may share some of the same functions (for example, teaching responsibilities) and be able to graft on others (common rooms and dinners), but commensality is not a core dimension of their purpose and unlikely to be central to their effective functioning. Halls of residence for undergraduates appear to be watered-down colleges and occasional departmental dinners (unlike formal departmental meetings) a somewhat contrived, and very limited, substitute for college's daily high table. Undoubtedly the cities in which the collegiate universities are ensconced can provide something of a counter-attraction to the commensality of the colleges; however, both Oxford and Cambridge are comparatively small cities and there still remains a 'town and gown' divide.

In the collegiate university and, although to a much lesser extent within the collegial tradition more broadly defined, commensality functions as the glue which holds the model together. It is a function that is ingrained into the historical experience of what is meant by a college, although – as one would expect – the richer the college, the more lavishly and enticingly it can finance its trappings. For both tutors and students it is a tangible way of building collegial loyalty, which has both practical and social (not least a sense of belonging) payoffs. And, although we have treated this claim with some scepticism, it has been argued that it forms a base for academic collegiality by enhancing the social interaction of fellows from different

disciplinary backgrounds. Indeed, it may make an even more significant contribution to donnish dominion by providing informal settings for the resolution of college affairs – over lunch or high table the cabals can arrive at informal deals. There is a popular literature given succour by the internal conflicts amongst college fellows, perhaps an inevitable fact of life in any institutional setting but potentially made more intense by the relatively small size of most college fellowships. It is probable that aspects of commensality will help to defuse tension or ensure that at least in public the semblance of good manners prevails. Moreover, although the benefits of commensality may be widely shared within a college, it is undoubtedly the fellows who gain most – their status within the hierarchy is reaffirmed and perhaps even a sense of ownership takes root.

A comparative lack of commensality may reflect not only different historical developments but also different interpretations of the purposes of higher education and contrasting individual needs. Although exposure to the experience of higher education is more than an academic training (excepting perhaps the distance-learning institutions), the broader socialising experiences have historically been linked to the collegiate universities, and commensality is integral to those experiences. Furthermore, if donnish dominion is restricted in the non-collegiate universities, both federal and unitary, then commensality inevitably has a more confined role to play. In those circumstances the policy-making and implementation process is more hierarchical and bureaucratic rather than collegial.

The Manifestation of Core Values

Our presentation and interpretation of the core collegial values will be organised around three institutional characteristics: structures, modes of governance and goals. The intention is to outline the underlying premises of the collegial tradition and then compare and contrast their manifestation in the collegiate universities of Oxford and Cambridge with their representation in the wider system of British higher education. It is important to emphasise at the outset that this juxtaposes models that have considerable internal complexity. As we have already noted, there are differences between Oxford and Cambridge, and the British system of higher education also has a varied character with an internal diversification that is almost certainly increasing. The analysis, therefore, will address some of the critical differences with respect to both values and institutional behaviour across and within the different models.

Structures

In the age of mass higher education, universities have expanded rapidly in size and are increasingly complex institutions – the multiversity that shelters a diverse range of interests with a myriad of identities. In apparent antipathy to this trend is to be found the collegial tradition, which embraces the idea that ‘small is beautiful’. But

it is not so much the size of the multiversity that is an issue but rather the need for its constituent elements to embody a number of comparatively small, relatively autonomous identities if it is to retain any semblance of the collegial tradition.

Within itself smallness is of little value without the sense of institutional identity; to be meaningful small institutions have to establish a clear presence. This can be expressed in various ways: a defined purpose, a strong historical legacy and physical manifestations of their image – buildings, walls, gardens and even insignia. However, there are two ultimate defences that will ensure the longevity of small institutions. They need to have their autonomy founded on a legal basis (they are formally recognised as independent bodies), and they need to generate their own resources (wealth, income, status and power), which preferably are based on past legacies and current activities rather than dependent upon the largesse of others.

So, within the collegial tradition smallness is combined with strength. However, it cannot be a strength that results in institutional self-indulgence at the expense of the greater whole, and certainly not a strength that leads to independence. Autonomy in the collegial context does not mean complete freedom of action. Thus the key facet of collegiality is not that smallness alone is a virtue in its own right, but also how the various colleges co-operate with one another in conjunction with the central body to fulfil the functions of the university. Collegiate universities are federal institutions and if cooperation is dissipated, as in recent years has been true of both the University of London and the University of Wales, then not only is the federal model threatened but so is the idea of collegiality itself. As the federal model is eroded, for collegiality to survive in London and Wales it will need to be expressed in different contexts – that is within the increasingly independent colleges.

The collegial tradition has an ambivalent relationship to the concept of power. It could be argued that it is a key collegial value to ensure that power is dispersed by a federal model of governance and within both college and university ultimate authority is located in the membership at large. But there is also a firm belief in the efficacy of the collegial tradition as a mode of governance so its federalism is perceived, not simply as a way of dispersing power as an end in itself, but also as a means of enabling a number of institutions to work together to achieve the more effective delivery of higher education. Of course, the federal model, as clearly illustrated by the foundation of the University of London in relation to University College and King's College, can serve political purposes but, unless it is also perceived as a positive value in its own right, its appeal is limited.

Modes of Governance

A strong case can be made out for the claim that, although the collegial tradition may have many qualities, in particular it values highly (perhaps in certain circumstances – including the contemporary context – too highly) the stability of established structures and practices. Viewed in this way it is a conservative force. However, it is not a question of an obsessive attachment to the past but rather the

value that is placed upon proceeding consensually. Thus it is the decision-making process itself rather than an attachment to particular values that induces conservatism. Change may occur at a faster pace than suits the most recalcitrant individual, but it is a tradition that gives well-organised groups (which in fairness may well be representative of a body of opinion) if not a veto on change, then the opportunity to forestall action. When change (eventually) comes, it should be with a sense of communal ownership since all have fully participated in the decision-making process. But the difficulty, as always, is to know when opposition reflects more the advocacy of a constructive defence of the status quo as opposed to the protection of vested self-interests.

The conservatism that is inherent to collegiality partly embodies a rejection of both the charismatic and managerial modes of governance coupled with structures and processes that incorporate a combination of the academic attachment to rationality, the institutional embracing of bureaucratic modes of administration (how do colleges and universities within the collegiate model conduct their day-to-day business?) and kinship ties – in the sense that tutors are a community of articulate, broadly equal, participants in the decision-making process. Collegial governance operates, therefore, through committee structures. The path to the truth is determined by rational, open discussion with a certain amount of steering (there are college committees and college officers). This is a rational and participatory citizenry, which places a high value upon institutional loyalty. The contemporary resistance at Oxford to majority lay representation on its supreme executive body, the Council, is not just about keeping 'the barbarians' at bay but also reflects a firm belief that the established governance model worked well in the past (so why change it?), and that the development of the University of Oxford is likely to follow a more benign path if its executive body is composed of a majority of insiders – those who have demonstrated their loyalty to, and understanding of, the University by serving it well in the past.

Thus, there is a procedural conservatism to collegiality that has ingrained within it the idea that institutions function effectively if they function consensually. Underlying this idea is the powerful belief that collegial institutions are communal institutions. Whatever functions they are required to perform they need to fulfil them in a manner that emphasises their communal identity. Tutorial teaching is not just about the supposed pedagogical potency of a particular mode of teaching for it also establishes an intellectual, even social, relationship between tutors and students. And, of course, that communal identity is reinforced by college control over the selection of its membership and its rituals of socialisation.

Collegiality therefore functions in a manner that is underwritten by the three 'Cs' of conservatism: 1. commitment to established procedural practices, 2. consensus building, and 3. continuous reaffirmation of communal identity. It looks inwards rather than outwards and responds to pressure for change rather than anticipating it and implementing effective response strategies. Its mode of operation is deep but with a narrow reach; it functions in a manner designed to embrace those who belong but to exclude those who are not considered to be members, and even many of those who would aspire to be members.

Drawing the Argument Together

The ultimate purpose of most institutions is to secure their reproduction, and institutions with identities that in many cases have been formed over centuries are likely to be prime examples of this proposition. Therefore, for the colleges within the collegiate universities, collegiality has to achieve the goal of institutional survival, indeed of institutional prosperity. In certain respects the comparative reference point is the college's past, and there is a considerable literature that charts the fluctuating fortunes of individual colleges, and of the two ancient collegiate universities, with the eighteenth century often singled out as a period of decline.

The alternative reference point is institutional comparisons – colleges with other colleges, the collegiate universities both with one another and other models of the university (incorporating both a national and an international perspective). Although historically within the national system of higher education Oxford and Cambridge have been accorded a combined elevated status (Oxbridge suggests both a common identity and an equal status), the contemporary fashion for league tables separates them out with Cambridge invariably scoring better in the international rankings. Is this because Cambridge is a more effective collegiate university? Or does it have more to do with the fact that Cambridge has a larger science base and thus is able to post more favourable scores in the science citations indices that carry so much weight in determining world-class league table positions? Be it as it may, the question of the impact of the collegial tradition upon institutional performance has to be addressed as the comparative evaluative scope widens.

While colleges may continue to worry about inter-college comparisons, this is an essentially parochial concern when Oxford and Cambridge are being compared with the elite American institutions, and more particularly the Ivy League universities. Is the collegiate model of the university an asset or an impediment when it comes to acquiring and sustaining global status? If collegiality hinders institutional performance with reference to the criteria that determine rankings, how does the collegiate university respond to the possible dilemma? Jettison the model (assuming this is possible)? Modify practices to lessen the apparent handicap? Carry on regardless in the conviction that collegiality conveys advantages that outweigh league table performance?

If the first goal is institutional self-perpetuation and enhancement, then the second is a commitment to the effective performance of core functions, which means preserving a valued model of the experience of higher education. At the very core of the collegial tradition, within all its various institutional manifestations, is to be found the belief that without its presence the experience of higher education has, if not little, then considerably less value. Moreover, it is within the collegiate universities in particular that it is able to make its most significant contribution to our understanding of higher education – in terms of the formal education of undergraduates, the broader socialisation variables that make being a student a worthwhile experience, and the enrichment of academic careers. One of the central tasks of the next chapter is to examine the recent challenges to the tradition and whether or not

it is, if not about to disappear, then of decreasing worth because the character of higher education has changed in ways that make the collegial tradition less relevant in today's world.

The bald representation of institutional differences between the collegial and unitary models of higher education (see Fig. 2.1) has to be refined by a range of considerations. First, it could be argued that the differentiations between the two models are too sharply drawn, and this is particularly so with regard to 'procedural values' and 'goals' (which, unlike the other variables, are less easy to define in terms of structures). For example, the idea of a liberal education has penetrated the British system of higher education on a wide front and professional training (note law and medicine) is not something that the collegiate universities shun, although this may be enwrapped in a liberal pedagogical framework. Moreover, the tension between 'consensus building' and competition for resources (including status) is germane to most institutions. The categorisation comes down to making judgements regarding the balance between the contrasting representational forms.

It is also important when interpreting Fig. 2.1 to recognise that British higher education has undergone rapid changes in recent years, which are still working their way through the system. In comparison to the 30-year period following 1945, the subsequent 30 years have been marked by considerable change and turmoil, which – arguably – has speeded up and intensified over time. The issue, therefore, is to discern in which direction the representational forms are moving. There appears to be shifts in both directions: the generation of income is part of the entrepreneurial vision that many higher education institutions (HEIs) now promote, and there seems to be a universal urge to produce development plans – projections of future institutional growth, well-being and harmony. But are eddies in one direction overwhelmed by a tidal wave in the opposite? Is the future a steadily watered-down but more universally distributed collegial tradition?

Undoubtedly the development that has most complicated the picture is the expansion and diversification of higher education – the rise of the multiversity coupled

	Representational Forms	
The Key Characteristics	*Collegiate Universities* (Oxford and Cambridge)	*Unitary Models* (Most other UK institutions)
Sharing of functions	Federal structures	Devolution of responsibilities/authority
Institutional forms	Colleges/university	Academic units/colleges/university
Formal institutional status	Legally defined	Underwritten by university constitutions and models of future development
Resource distribution	Self-generating/formula-funding	Formula-funding/drivenby planninggoals
Locus of control	Donnish dominion/administration	Leadership cadre/managerialism
Procedural values	Stability/consensus building/communal ethos	Continuity/resource discrimination/competitive ethos
Goals	Institutional reproduction/a liberal education	Institutional dynamism/the training of experts

Fig. 2.1 The representation of institutional characteristics and practices in UK higher education

with the growth of a system of higher education within which there is considerable internal differentiation in terms of institutional missions. Moreover, within individual universities one will find contrasting segments pursuing very different goals: undergraduate education, cutting edge research, and a range of service and consultancy functions. The premise is that these different purposes are likely to require contrasting organisational forms. Therefore, an alternative model of the future is to think of islands of collegiality surviving within a wider environment that could very well be, if not hostile, not especially supportive of the collegial model. In response to this diversity the book, with reference mainly to the University of London, will explore the pressure upon the federal model of governance (which we have claimed is core to the collegial tradition) and the role of the colleges at the Universities of Durham, Kent, Lancaster and York. These are developments that complicate the simple bipolar model constructed in Fig. 2.1.

Equally significant is the fact that the current British system of higher education is composed of institutions with contrasting histories, including markedly different traditions of governance and administration. We have referred to the fact that Oxford and Cambridge represent two somewhat contrasting interpretations of the collegiate university, but this pales into insignificance in comparison to the divide between the pre- and post-1992 universities. The key discriminating factor in discerning institutional differences may have more to do with their embedded historical traditions rather formal structural comparisons – for example, unitary as opposed to federal universities. Of course, the embedded historical traditions will have structural variables that are part of their character, and in the case of the pre-1992 universities, one can point to the one-time dependence on local funding, accountability to local authorities and a strong managerial ethos. These are historical legacies that may have been eroded over time but what has to be determined is the strength of the cultural heritage. How sympathetic is it to the intrusion of new values and practices given that some of the traditional values (accountability, responding to local interests and the need for firm institutional management in higher education institutions) may gel with the dominant contemporary political sentiment?

It is possible, therefore, to interpret Fig. 2.1 as representing two contrasting models of the university or to argue that the two models have sufficient in common to see them as variants of one model, especially if the qualifications – diversification within institutions and across the system, the two-way flow of change over time and the problem of defining institutional goals (there is scarcely a British university that does not claim to have a vibrant, even if narrow, research record) – are taken into account. To stretch the interpretation of the collegial tradition further means going beyond the British experience.

There are three different avenues of analysis that will be explored in this book. First, there is the focus on trends mainly in English higher education: the University of London (although the future of federalism is also an issue for the University of Wales); the Universities of Durham, Kent, Lancaster and York (universities with colleges but not – arguably – collegiate universities); and the impact of the so-called managerial revolution (with the focus on the Universities of Birmingham, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Nottingham and Southampton). Second,

there is the American experience, which is critical in spite of the powerful influence of the German tradition of higher education. The Ivy League universities and the east coast liberal arts colleges embody clear elements of collegiality encompassed within the commitment to a liberal education. The American fascination with Oxbridge remains strong (embodying clear elements of nostalgia), even embracing someone as clear-sighted and pragmatic as Clark Kerr who saw the University of California's Santa Cruz campus as a state-funded embodiment of the collegiate tradition. Although this was perhaps an impossible dream, the Claremont Colleges of California continue to relish the challenge with the Graduate University of Claremont billing itself as 'an Oxford in the orange groves'!

The American embracing of the collegial tradition required modifications of the values and structures that took root in England. The critical variant was the need to place that tradition in a different social context – one that embodied the idea of social mobility, classlessness and frontier traditions. Collegiality was an educational ideal and not tied into a process of social reproduction – although the reality was clearly very different with contemporary scholarship confirming what must have been widely known – even if concealed – at the time (Karabel, 2006). Interestingly this draws the Anglo-American traditions of collegiality closer together.

For a third and very different tradition of collegiality, continental Europe provides the model. Whilst higher education institutions, especially in Germany, may have been extensions of the state apparatus and their academics in effect civil servants, this is not to say that policy direction was in the hands of the state – either its political or its bureaucratic arms. Universities have been controlled by a professorial guild – an elevated form of donnish dominion. The residential college for undergraduates is conspicuous for the most part by its absence with the university encompassed within the urban environment. Also universities have different academic concerns (the making of experts and the pursuit of research), which necessitate different interpretations of collegiality within the framework of the legacies of Humboldt and the Napoleonic model.

A Core Meaning?

With respect to the collegiate universities the key to understanding their futures is dependent upon two variables. First, there is the relationship between university and colleges in the fulfilment of core functions. Once there is a serious disturbance of the balance of authority between these two power centres then the collegiate university is in trouble. Second, it is a model of governance that is dependent upon a broad input across the faculty into defining and implementing the institution's academic goals. The central academic purposes – what is to be pursued and how it is to be pursued – have to be under donnish control if the collegial tradition, within and beyond the collegiate universities, is to survive. By way of contrast, intellectual collegiality is a potential by-product of the collegial process, and commensality essentially a means for achieving and sustaining it. Neither are core characteristics that match

either the importance of a viable federal model of governance or the control that academic faculty need to exercise over the essential purposes of the institution.

The commitment to federalism necessitates the perpetuation of a particular model of the university, one in which the autonomy of institutional levels is constructed on secure foundations, and there is an acceptance that the fulfilment of functions is a shared responsibility. And it is difficult to imagine the flourishing of either the collegial tradition or the collegiate university without the embracing of agreed procedures of governance and administration, the building of broad alliances in response to potentially divisive policy issues, and the presence of practices designed to build a sense of communal identity. These are the means by which the collegial tradition is sustained.

Collegiality (both as collegiate universities and as a more widely embedded tradition) is, therefore, about the steady reinforcement of particular structures and procedures of governance. But it also has embedded within it a belief in the value of what we have termed a liberal education. So the collegial tradition is more than structures and procedures for it also embodies a powerful educational ideal that embraces the very purpose of the university.

Ideas will be underwritten by particular values but realised in different forms, and the form in which they are made concrete can lead to their withering away rather than their prospering. Not surprisingly, the instigators of change may believe that they are acting in the best interests of the institution, that their proposed reforms are essential to its survival. Survival may indeed be achieved, and the successful strategy may well have been the only viable option. But institutional preservation may be achieved at a very high price, that is the steady erosion of any meaningful understanding of the embedded traditional values and that the core sustaining ideas could lose all their intrinsic value.

The situation, however, is more complex than the straightforward endeavour to maintain conceptual integrity. The collegiate universities and the collegial tradition have been reformulated over the centuries. Why should established structures and procedures take precedence over new ideas and needs? The core values of collegiality that we have identified are social constructions that emerged out of responses to past pressures. They may have become sacrosanct over time but were at the centre of political struggle in the latter half of the nineteenth century when so much of contemporary Oxbridge was taking shape. The issue, however, is not the defence of an innate conservatism against progressive change but rather a desire for conceptual clarity. The process of social change is inevitably encompassed in a struggle between competing ideas, and it has to be recognised that old values and practices do not necessarily survive in new forms but, on the contrary, they may wither and die.

But this is not to say that reformulation is impossible. We have argued that federalism is an inherently unstable model of governance and, rather than a weakness, this can be one of its inherent strengths. It is a model of governance that can evolve both formally (constitutional change) and informally (acting differently in response to evolving needs). We have suggested that part of the revitalisation of Oxford and Cambridge in the latter half of the nineteenth century was that the authority of the colleges and the universities expanded in conjunction with one another – first the

colleges and then the universities. As our next chapter will demonstrate the contemporary pressures are such that power is in danger of gravitating (that is, within the collegiate universities) from the colleges towards the universities. Does this represent a significant evolution of the federal model to the point that we can say collegiality is under threat at Oxford and Cambridge? Similarly, it is possible to point to the development of a far stronger managerial ethos in most universities, which steadily restricts the scope of donnish dominion. Moreover, a distinction needs to be drawn between fulfilling the current agenda (what is taught and researched, the means of delivery and the process of evaluation) and determining future academic developments. Without control of the latter, donnish dominion becomes essentially the efficient use of technical expertise.

As so often the question of whether we are experiencing the demise of an idea of the university or merely a long overdue reformation of its character depends upon the evaluation of the evidence. And, sooner or later the social construction of reality will be shaped by the weight of that evidence. At a certain point in time it may be necessary to accept that a myth rather than an idea is under the microscope.