

**Interview with William Hogan**

**Interviewed by Associate Dean Ann M. Pflaum  
University of Minnesota**

**Interviewed on July 14, 1999**

William Hogan        - WH  
Ann Pflaum            - AP

AP: This is Ann Pflaum. It is July 14, 1999. I'm talking with the Honorable William Hogan, who has been chairman of the Board of Regents until this last year.

Bill, if you will talk a little bit about your own family background, how you then got to the university and your time as board member and chair, I would just be delighted. I'll turn this mike over to you.

WH: Thanks, Ann.

My background is twofold. I have experience in industry and in education. My experience in industry began as an engineer and wound up as a project manager and, then, subsequently, after an academic tenure as a professor, dean, and working in the provost office, I was a vice-president and senior executive at Honeywell and Medtronic for many years, winding up as v.p. of operations at Medtronic. I, then, became chairman and CEO [chief executive officer] of small companies up to \$25 million and, then, I became chairman and CEO of an investment firm. We have a couple firms now which deal with investments and transactions.

My family... I've been married for thirty-four years. We have two children. I was born in Alabama, lived in New Jersey, New York, the Midwest, Texas, and Oklahoma. I have a B.S. and Ph.D. from Oklahoma State University in electrical engineering, a masters' in electrical engineering from Southern Methodist University. I count myself very fortunate to have experiences in industry and education.

I've been on the Board of Regents for six years, beginning in 1993, and chairman from 1997 to 1999. I'm continuing for another six years to the year 2005 and going forward chairing several committees on the board and acting as a senior adviser, statesman, on the board. Does that help?

AP: That's wonderful.

Your time as board chair spans two administrations: the [Nils] Hasselmo Administration and [Mark] Yudof Administration. There's always an interest in the life of the university in different stages. How

did you see the university when you came into it in 1993? Hasselmo had been in office since 1989. He was catching his stride with Access to Excellence. How did it seem to you and what attracted you to join the board?

WH: My attraction in joining the board came from my service in higher education over eleven years at the University of Kansas, my love for the University of Minnesota and all universities, and my wanting to help the university achieve new heights.

The University of Minnesota in 1993 was pursuing Access to Excellence, but it was just beginning to be understood by the citizens of Minnesota. It needed more definition. It needed more articulation across the state, an explanation of what it meant and how do you implement something called Access to Excellence or U-2000? I found President Hasselmo to be a traditional president, having worked with several in my life. He was very different than the current administration. He loved the university. He believed in academic integrity. He was extremely conservative with respect to the budget and tended to garner the budget to support more of the academic mission of the university than the physical facilities and other matters at the university. He was an ardent supporter of the university in his own way. His time and tenure at the university were, obviously, marked by some controversy with respect to the tenure discussions, which caused a tenure crisis and almost a vote to unionize. But, they were also characterized by a number of advances in terms of excellence in the student body and excellence in undergraduate education. So I found the university in 1993 to be growing, to be finding a number of issues and solving them, such as ALG [Antilymphocytic Globulin] or matters related to that, and proceeding like most universities.

AP: If you're talking to a colleague from another part of the country or another part of the world and saying, "I'm on the board," or "I'm chairman of the University of Minnesota," and someone says to you, "Give me a sketch of the university. What's it like?" how do you explain this place to someone like that?

WH: The University of Minnesota, in 1993 versus now, has always been a division one research university. In other words, it's a major academic institution, research university, ranked in the top twenty in this nation, if you look at the public universities and, in fact, is in the twenties if you look at public and private. It is in the top ten in number of research dollars, getting more than \$300 million in research grants. It has a fine faculty and ranks in the top ten in a number of departments. It has a faculty of 3,000. It is a single point of focus for research in the state of Minnesota and is a land-grant university, founded by the [unclear], so it handles from agriculture to medicine to veterinary medicine to all the liberal arts and letters and to the sciences and what have you.

In 1993, some of those areas were not as supported as they are today. One of the biggest differences in today and 1993 comes in the form of the budgetary support from the legislature for physical facilities, undergraduate education, and salaries. There were more budget reallocations in the 1993 to 1999 time frame. However, I believe that the budgetary explanations and direction of the budget is probably more understood and more focused, if you will, on the academic mission of the university today. So a great university continuing to focus on academic excellence and undergraduate instruction, research support, and has a goal, now, of becoming one of the top five in the nation.

AP: That would be top five public?

WH: Top five public universities.

AP: Is there a part of the university that you particularly enjoy the most, that interests you more than some other part or like a grandfather, do you have to admire all of your children equally?

WH: Hmmm. I think you'll find that I tend to admire all the children more equally than I do favoring one for a variety of reasons. Even though I taught in engineering, I don't want to show a preference to engineering. I believe that no university can be great without each component. Certainly, the liberal arts need more support at the University of Minnesota. You tend to find more dollars historically placed into the Institute of Technology than you do in the liberal arts section. If I had a favorite leaning it would be to balance the university. To have a comprehensive major research university, each component has to be strong, including liberal arts.

AP: Did you find it vastly different being chairman of the board from being a board member or is it a kind of rotation that a number of board members take and it isn't that different?

WH: No, I found it to be substantially different. As chair, you really are on the point for every issue that comes before the board and while you should delegate that responsibility, you should know something about where you're going and what you want to do. As chair of the board, I also had a mission and vision, which I helped prepare with the board, to move the university toward some very unique structure and directions while I was chairman of the board. We looked, for instance, at technology transfer and making sure that the university would become a number one economic engine for the state during my tenure as chair. We looked at restructuring the financial investment advisory groups inside and outside the university while I was on the board. We looked at changing support for the faculty and rebuilding faculty relationships while I was chairman of the board, which were in tatters when I came on board as chair. In my heart, my most important mission was to rebuild the relationships with the faculty and staff and students, to make sure that they thought the board was a decent group and that the university was a decent group which they wanted to be a part of, support, and live there. As you know, Ann, working in the university is not always easy. It tends to be a closed system. I was also very committed, as I have been throughout the Hasselmo years, to diversity, not just black but [all] minorities, to women and to making sure that we had a difference of opinion on the board and would listen to the differences of opinion at the university.

AP: If you look at the school, now, under a different set of leaders, a different set of challenges, just on the edge of the millennium, are there things that you see coming up that are going to be important for the board and for the university?

WH: Yes. There are several number one issues. One of those issues is, how do you balance external support from the legislature versus private dollars? How do you make sure that you really do get the salaries in for faculty and staff that you need without compromising the legislative program? How do you get the dollars you need to support a major research university that is growing in a state that has

a not shrinking but certainly constrained pie of allocations? Secondly, how do you build the greatest faculty and become one of the universities in the top five in this nation? It's not just dollars but what sort of policies do you put in place that people want to come here and they want to support everything?

[break in the interview]

WH: How do you, then, attract the best students to the university but make sure that those students represent a diverse group of people? How do you balance the interest of athletics and academics? We've had a scare in our life for the first time where academic integrity was severely questioned and challenged by activities alleged to have occurred in the basketball program. Indeed, the investigation has found numerous incidents of academic fraud. How do we make sure that doesn't happen again and maintain our academic program and maintain a great sports program, a program which is competitive but, at the same time, does not violate any academic integrity? How do we do that?

AP: One of the issues that has been written about a lot about the board is the transition to a more hands-off policy-oriented board role in the last three, to five, to seven years. Would I be wrong? I've heard people talk about that, but not being close to the board, is that a transition you've seen, to sort of more policy and less involvement in day-to-day?

WH: The answer is yes, Ann. Certainly during my tenure, we had become more acting more like a governance industrial sector board, in which we were looking just at policy and working in such a way that we were just a policy governing board. As chair, I tried to act like I was chair of a company board: be present, be ever vigilant, be a great supporter for the president, make sure that you are building the faculty and staff and building the institution, be cautious in the sense of pointing out road blocks and pitfalls and potholes in the road, and at the same time, stay away, sometimes, until called or needed. It's a very delicate balancing act being chair. It's a very delicate balancing act being on the board of a university. Universities tend to want to involve you more than industry.

AP: Have you had a chance—this is one of my last questions—as board chair to look at other Big Ten universities or other comparable universities and, if so, are there any either lessons that Minnesota might profitably learn from their experience or things that we are way out ahead of them in?

WH: My answer is yes. This began before I became chair, but we visited a number of other universities. During my tenure, we visited Ohio State and we visited Michigan. We sat down on each occasion and visited with the board, board of overseers or board of regents, for a rather long meeting. We talked about policy issues. We talked about diversity. We talked about [unclear] and the law suits occurring in the nation. We talked about athletics. We talked about information systems and software, which is extremely difficult to implement, in fact causing major cost overruns and other matters. We talked about the hot spots with respect to board leadership, board/president interaction. This was when we went to Michigan. As you well know, the president there finally became on the outs with the board. We talked about how did that go? What happened? What can be done so

maybe we don't incur those kinds of things? In some sense, we were able to sit in a room and talk with our colleagues at other universities and say, "What bothers you? What do you see?"

I also had the luxury—it really was a luxury and a blessing—of being asked to present something at the Association of Governing Boards. This board, beginning during Tom Regan's tenure, started going to the Association of Governing Boards [AGB] meetings, which is an association that builds boards. That began under Tom Reagan's leadership. Then, I got to make a presentation during my time as chair on the issue of COMPACTs. The COMPACT process helped University-2000 survive and make it real. It wasn't real when everybody had to do the same thing. In COMPACT-2000, there were individual plans for each school, each area. So, as a result of that, I got to participate and make those presentations. I got to talk to the Association of Governing Boards of the universities and at the AGB meetings, I, obviously met with a number of other colleagues from California to Maine, in terms of problems.

AP: That is very interesting and very helpful.

One of the questions I always ask people is whether there are any questions that I haven't asked them that they would like to comment on.

WH: I guess, Ann, the most difficult part of life in the university is to build a university that is ever increasing in its complexity and excellence and, yet, ever open to criticism and the acceptance of new ideas and new people. How do you create an environment with a board? How did the boards in the past create an environment which allowed the president to build an atmosphere in the university so that people could grow, wanted to be a part of it, and wanted to go forward? That's the question which is fairly complex. When you begin to ask those questions, you get at the root of the underlying causes for various actions. If you asked me that question, I would say that each board has had different levels of commitment to that. Some have been better than others.

AP: Thank you very much. I appreciate your taking time from your busy day to give this interview.

WH: You're doing the hard thing. You're trying to write a history. I don't know how you can even do that.

AP: Thank you very much.

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[End of the Interview]

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