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College: The Undergraduate Experience

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Olin Robison

Elegon + Institution

the 1st
syndicate
guys
to

asked to
be here

- 1) Super Indicate Paper
- 2) Intellectual Property
- 3) Board of School of English

fresh
ground

So far from London

→ LION / CHARTER

INTRODUCTION

In 1871 a relatively unknown Republican politician addressed an alumni dinner at Williams College--his alma mater. "The ideal college," he said, "is Mark Hopkins at one end of the log and a student on the other."

- o The speaker was James A. Garfield, a former college president, who later became the 20th President of the United States.
- o But nothing Garfield said in his tragically short term in office was to be as long remembered as his romanticized view of the American College.

Today, no one even remotely familiar with the modern college or university with its classrooms, its stadium, and its student union, would dare compare the campus to a log, and, if so, surely not a "single" log.

Still President Garfield's touching image of Williams College remains symbolic of the love affair Americans have with education.

During the past three years we at The Carnegie Foundation have been looking at the undergraduate experience in the United States.

o We found that a college education is still highly prized.

90% of H.S. students said "someday I want to go to coll"

Cal State
Yale
Trinity
MERCER
CC

o And we were reminded that it's only in America where the decal from almost any college is displayed proudly on the rear window of the family car. The message here is a family on the move.

This faith in education was captured well by a student who said to one of our researchers: "I want a better life for myself. That means college."

They are struck
We surveyed 5,000 faculty and 5,000 students, 1,000 academic deans and 1,000 high school students and their parents. We spent several thousand hours visiting 29 representative colleges that ranged from an Ivy League institution in New England, to a small church college in the South, to a large, land grant university in the West.

we struck

celebrate our openness - D.V.T.

Continuously, we were struck by the great diversity of American higher education. No two campuses are alike. And yet we found striking similarities, as well.

close your eyes

4 years 128 unit go up my way ~~institution~~ Princeton H.S. follow the leader

also
We were impressed repeatedly by the degree of intellectual freedom on the campus;

by the openness of ideas and by the integrity of those who

direct the work of high ed

we say that

~~direct the work of American higher education.~~

Our system is, ~~in short~~, the envy of the world.

is the kind of interest by the institutions that sponsored it. elements quite beyond school

At the same time, we found that many undergraduate programs have been overshadowed by graduate and professional education and that the focus increasingly has been more on credentialing than in providing a quality education.

Here again, however, we found wide gradations from one institution to another.

1) Perhaps a half dozen of the colleges in our sample were in good health with clear goals, a curriculum with a purpose, and effective teaching.

2) At the other end of the spectrum, several colleges we visited were barely hanging on.

3) In between, at the majority of institutions, the picture was quite mixed.

Overall we characterized these places as "troubled" institutions and we focus our report on eight specific points of tension that we encountered time and time again.

~~We consider in our study~~

(45)

Overall, we characterize the
Independent College as a

"~~four~~ Institution"

And this morning I'd like
to focus on 4 themes
that are at the heart of our
Report

LANGUAGE

(1)

^I
~~THE CARNEGIE~~
We begin ~~our~~ Report by affirming

LEWIS THOMAS
"The school is
the first
to set us right
from all
a man
forms
life"

(1)

In the Carnegie Report we conclude that proficiency in the written and the spoken word is the first prerequisite for an effective education.

We conclude that all undergraduates should be able to write and speak with clarity and to read and listen with comprehension.

Be the going
further
It's hard
complex
that

it would be
emphasis on the
written & the
spoken word

In second
Miss
Rice

It's almost embarrassing to have to mention "these ~~academic~~ college-level skills" - at a conference on college education

And yet during our study we repeatedly heard faculty complain that many students do not have the capacity to do academic work.

One mathematics professor put the problem this way: "There's a lot of talk around here about preparing more scientists and engineers, but the biggest problem I have with my students is getting them to read and write."

In our nationwide survey we found that

more than half the faculty rated the academic preparation of students at their college as only "fair or poor."

① This negative rating has increased 8 percentage points since 1976. And in large measure the concern relates to language.

② Eighty-three percent felt that today's high school students should be academically better prepared.

③ And two-thirds of the faculty surveyed agreed that their institution "spends too much time and money teaching students what they should have learned in school."

Evaluating the language proficiency of college students is absolutely crucial.

But we found it disturbing that most language tests focus far too much on the mechanics of language rather than on its meaning.

At one university where there is a statewide language test given to college students at the end of their sophomore year, the head of the English department said:

① "The test devastates the content of our composition program.

NAKED
MOST ADULTS
CAN READ
But many
cannot
be reached

② Because the Regents Test is primarily designed to establish a minimal level of literacy, our teaching of this test tends to make the minimum the goal,

③ a circumstance that guarantees mediocrity in the end."

Reading, writing, and computation are essential. But does anyone really believe that measuring these basic skills,

which should have been mastered in the early years, has anything to do with college outcomes?

In the Carnegie Report we say that if college students are to achieve language proficiency the solution lies

not in junior or senior level testing but in better precollege education and in intensive remedial work at the beginning of the college experience--when something can be done.

We recommend, therefore, that every college and university work closely with surrounding school districts to improve the teaching of English in the nation's schools.

① And we cite in our report the National Writing Project based at Berkeley,

2

and the University of Michigan's statewide writing project, as examples.

But the language skills we seek in college must be of a higher order.

In the Carnegie Report we suggest that all students must have the capacity

- 1 to think critically,
- 2 to draw inferences,
- 3 and to convey, through effective written and oral communication, subtle shades of meaning

We propose, therefore, a ^{two-semester} Basic English course with emphasis on writing--for all freshmen.

with ~~the~~ address this curriculum. by that we mean that

And we recommend that every college educator insist that high order intellectual and linguistic qualities be assessed in every class and throughout the whole of the undergraduate experience.

*MIDDLEBURY
FRESHMAN
WRITING
REQUIREMENT*

Here we mention Brown University's ~~Fellows~~'s Program in which undergraduates tutor other students.

And we discuss the University of Texas at Austin which has an English language sequence for all students that extends from the freshmen to the senior years.

*DIRECTOR
OF
WRITING*

SENIOR THESIS - CLEAR THINKING
CLARITY THAT

The point is that language is not just another subject. It is the means by which all other subjects are pursued.

CLEAR THINKING CAN

And it is our position that as undergraduates refine their linguistic skills

BE THOUGHT

they hone the quality of their thinking and become intellectually and socially empowered.



GENERAL & SPECIALIZED Ed

II

This brings me to PRIORITY #2

II

This brings me to our second concern regarding academic goals

We conclude that the undergraduate college should close the gap between general and specialized education.

During our study we were repeatedly reminded that the baccalaureate degree is organized into two sharply divided, often competing camps.

On the one hand, there is general education which students describe as an "irritating hurdle."

On the other, there is the academic major which is far more popular and which appears to operate in a wholly separate world.

This unhealthy separation divides the baccalaureate at the very time we should be trying to put the pieces back together and the first task, we say, is to breathe new life into "general education."

During our Carnegie visits we did find at many institutions a renewed interest in general education. ^{for a while} And in a survey of 1,000 academic deans we learned that two-thirds of the nation's

colleges and universities have, in recent years, revised their general education programs.

Since 1970, requirements in English, philosophy, western civilization, third-world courses, and international education have increased. The greatest increases have been in computer literacy, mathematics, and the arts. Parenthetically, during this same period, foreign language and physical education requirements have gone down.

Further, over half of the administrators report that their own personal commitment and the commitment of faculty to general education has enlarged in the past five years.

Indeed, given the fragmentation of academic life we found it remarkable that the vision of common learning remains so powerful a part of the baccalaureate experience.

We ~~are~~ ^{was} troubled, however, that the distribution arrangement found in over 90 percent of the nation's colleges and universities is rarely satisfying either to faculty or to students.

And when we asked in a study of 5000 college students if they would support more general education in selected fields

the only subject that got strong support was computer science.

When we asked 5000 college students if they would support more general education in selected fields

the only subject that got strong support was computer science.

Especially disturbing is the fact that history received the least support.

- o Language
- o Historical Perspective

~~What we found, in short, is that on most campuses general education still lacks support and a clear sense of purpose.~~

what we found, in short, is that on most campuses ~~Catalogue hyperbole notwithstanding~~ general education still remains--~~on most campuses~~--an academic orphan.

~~mit~~ I confess that I ~~with colleges of~~ ^{have} great ambivalence about this part of the undergraduate experience

- o I think it's foolish to talk about a rigid curriculum for all students
- o But I'm equally troubled by a random arrangement in which students pick and choose their way to graduation.
- o What we need perhaps is a new organizing theme.

(13)

~~5/20/22~~
In the Carnegie Report we say
that a college education has 2
overarching goals

(1)

The first is to help students
become independent, productive
self-reliant human beings

2) The second is to help students go beyond their private interests and place their own lives in larger context.

Colleges & schools

~~The harsh truth is that we have been far more successful in focusing on individuality than in affirming the commonalities of our existence.~~
we live in a complex, interdependent world - And the nature
HELPING STUDENTS
Their
in help them see connections OR TO AFFIRM

Students had
back in
9000

And it is here that the claims of general education can be made.

In 1972, I was sitting in my office in Albany, New York.

nothing in
Comm
order
system
CLEAR
30

It was a dreary Monday morning and, to avoid the pressures of the day,
I turned instinctively to the stack of 3rd class mail
I kept on the corner of my desk to create the illusion that I was very busy.

On top of the heap was the student newspaper from a distinguished university in the west.

The headline announced that the faculty had reintroduced a required course in Western Civilization after abolishing all requirements three years before.

The students were mightily offended and in a front page editorial declared that

a required course is an "illiberal act"

The editorial concluded by asking rhetorically,

how dare they impose "uniform standards" on "non-uniform people."

Frankly, I was startled by that statement.

I was startled that some of America's most gifted students, after fourteen or more years of formal education, still had not learned that

while we are "non-uniform" we still have many things in common.

They had not discovered the fundamental fact that while we are autonomous human beings, with our own aptitudes and interests, we are also deeply dependent on each other.

In the Carnegie Report we propose an approach to general education we call the integrated core. By the integrated core we mean a program of study that concerns itself with the human

*not a rigid set of courses
But a flexible approach to Gen Ed*

~~Not a find~~

experiences that are common to all people. The goal, we say, is to broaden the perspective of the students and help them connect the disciplines to the human condition.

But what are the common human experiences that might be explored. Beyond birth and growth and death we say in our report that language is universal,

in a general sense such as this

we say that

we all experience the aesthetic,

we all have a heritage to be explored,

we all are born into institutions that constitute the social web,

we all are all part of the ecology of the planet Earth.

we all We engage in work,

we all live by values and beliefs.

We suggest that within these common traditions a general education framework can be shaped and that the disciplines should serve, not as ends, but as means to explore these larger integrative themes.

IMPORTANT CONCEPT

Within these communities great diversity can be found

And one important goal is to CELEBRATE THE DIFFERENCES FROM ONE CULTURE TO ANOTHER

we do not propose a core of courses - 17- by + 420 college - One single

These seven themes could, ~~we say~~, be studied through a core of required courses, through a ^{new} purposeful distribution pattern through or a blend of both.

We also suggest that the themes could be explored outside the classroom--through special lectures and convocations and all-college seminars that bring together the whole academic community.

1959
4-14 Small college 1959 4-1-4 college
General Ed: all college cont - Midyear Year

Midyear Year

I interpret the college calendar
focus on large issues

BLow THE WHISTLE
CALL A TUNE OUT

comparable → MIDDLEBURY
FRESHMAN SEMINARS
ALL COLLEGE CONVOCATIONS
Perhaps this is the way by which LIBERAL LEARNING is MOST EFFECTIVELY ADVERTISED

In the end the quality of general education is to be measured not by the uniformity of the courses but by the quality of the best

III

III III

But an additional challenge remains. How can general education be more effectively related to the major?

We found during our study that what colleges teach most effectively in the major is competence-competence in the exploration of a special field of study. *upper division work is separated from 'Gen ed'*

o But what most of today's students are not being asked to do is to put their speciality in larger context or to consider the crucial question: Competence to what end?

During my days in government, I'd often be seated at a table where a dozen or so experts would prove, during long discussions, how technically competent they were. But almost all the really tough issues had less to do with specialized knowledge--than with insight, wisdom, and compassion. *own perspective*

What we worried about were such questions as these:

o Should HEW fund "gene-splicing research" that may introduce new mutations on the planet earth?

2) o How can we keep human subjects from being harmed during experimentation in the labs?

3) o And how can the city of Chicago desegregate its public schools in a way that serves all children and avoids white flight to the suburbs?

On these ~~subjects~~ ^{top 19} there are no "experts." There are human beings at a table trying to solve new and complicated problems—not simply by a recitation of facts—but by putting the problem in perspective.

o Therefore, in the ~~Carnegie Report~~ we conclude that the crisis in undergraduate education is not the focus on careers—after all education has always been considered "useful."

o The crisis is that, in too many fields, skills have become ends and the student's vision has been narrowed.

Alfred North Whitehead wrote about the unimportance, indeed, the evil, of "barren knowledge."

Knowledge Whitehead argued, becomes important only when we use it, when it becomes a part of us and I might add, when we apply it to humane ends.

In an editorial titled, How to Make People Smaller Than They Are,
Norman Cousins wrote:

① The doctor who knows only disease is at a disadvantage alongside the doctor who knows at least as much about people as he does about pathological organisms.

② The lawyer who argues in court from a narrow legal base is no match for the lawyer who can connect legal precedents to historical experience.

③ The business executive whose competence in general management is bolstered by an artistic ability to deal with people is of prime value to his company.

We suggest in our report that the values professionals bring to their work are every bit as crucial as the work itself, and we conclude that general and specialized education must be blended during college just as, inevitably, they must be blended during life.

To achieve this end

and we suggest that general education run throughout the baccalaureate experience—from the freshman through the senior year.

AND WE PROPOSE SOMETHING CALLED

we also suggest what we call the enriched major. The enriched major does not mean a capstone course in morality or ethics.

Rather, it means having students pursue some aspects of general education through the major as departments put their specialties in historical, social and ethical perspective.

Consider these examples:

1) Students specializing in computer science might be introduced to the history of technology and the social impact of the information revolution.

2) English majors could be asked to explore the roots of language and consider how symbol systems can be creatively used or dangerously abused.

3) Those in architecture, genetics, industrial technology and television production might be asked to examine the social and ethical implications of their work.

more carefully
through their professional course

Eric Ashby wrote that the path to culture should be "through a man's specialization—not by passing around it. A student who can weave his technology into the fabric of society can claim to have a liberal education, and a student who cannot weave his technology into the fabric of society cannot claim even to be a good technologist."

Paraphrase make the text on my

One important caveat must be made. In the end, courses alone do not bring coherence. What we need are teachers who not only are devoted to their disciplines but who also exemplify in the classroom the spirit of a liberal education.

Indeed one of the key concerns in our report is: how to maintain a (proper BALANCE) BETWEEN TEACHING & RESEARCH

In ~~the~~ THE

TEACHING / RESEARCH

IV

IV

~~Here~~ At this point I should say
 Indeed, one of the most familiar topics we discuss in our
~~a word about the age-old condition~~
 report is how to strike a balance between teaching and
 research.
 BETWEEN TEACHING & RESEARCH

In the
Carnegie

^{the first class research we found}
 Report We celebrate at selected universities and at the top ranking
 colleges in the nation.

But we also found that many faculty ^{make} publish third rate
 articles in publications that are an embarrassment to the
 profession and that undergraduates frequently are "short-changed"
 because good teaching is not adequately rewarded.

Our data also show that while 70 percent of the faculty we
 surveyed said publishing was the criterion for promotion, <sup>in their
deport</sup>

- o 60 percent said that they prefer teaching to
 research.

- o And 2/3 suggest that, in their opinion, tenure and
 promotion should be based on teaching rather than
~~research--where the emphasis is on the undergraduate
 experience.~~

In the Carnegie Report we try to strike a middle ground.

Research, as I have said, must stay with higher
 education

But we are troubled that on too many campuses, publication is being pushed without regard to mission.

And, in the process, students are neglected.

In our report we make a subtle--and some might say an inappropriate distinction

We suggest that while not all professors are publishing researchers, they should be, we propose, first rate scholars--keeping abreast of developments in their field, integrity of ideas and conveying them ^e affectively to students.

The Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset, in his classic Mission of the University, argued passionately for a Faculty of Culture ^{what he called} to provide the core of higher learning by synthesizing ^{in the student.} knowledge. As Ortega pointed out, education and the "search for truth" must each be supported without letting one dominate the other. Ortega argued ^{that the two missions should be kept distinct} for complete separation for the two ~~missions~~, with teaching being more institutionalized than research.

- o That may be impossible--even undesirable--today, but ^{we} ~~the~~ ^{must} central task remains to maintain a creative climate ^{that} supportive ^s of the work of both the young students ^{and} the seasoned scholar.

campus
life

(V) This brings me to one final observation.

After visiting campuses from coast to coast, we became convinced that one of the most urgent obligations is to focus on the quality of campus life.

The evidence is overwhelming that the effectiveness of the undergraduate experience is dramatically shaped by life outside the classroom. And yet we found a great gap on most campuses between the academic and nonacademic life of students.

Almost all colleges happily have abandoned in loco parentis and, yet, administrators are confused--and occasionally deeply troubled--about what precisely should replace it.

Even students are ambivalent about the authority they want:

One young woman said: We'd like you to understand one thing. We don't want the university to interfere in our lives. But we want someone in the university to be concerned with our lives.

A subtle distinction, perhaps, but our research suggests that today the university is not, in fact, much involved with students.

- o Almost 50 percent of the students in our national survey said they are treated like a number in a book.
- o About 40 percent said they do not feel a sense of community at the institution.
- o About the same percentage report that they have no professors who are interested in their academic program.
- o And 2/3 feel they cannot discuss personal matters with professors.

Here disaggregation is important. Only about 9 percent of the students at liberal arts colleges say they feel like numbers in a book and 75 percent of these students say there are professors with whom they can discuss academic matters. We found, in short, that some of the myths about the small college happen to be true.

At the same time, we found larger campuses where counseling and advising are, in fact, successful and where personal contact with students is maintained.

In the Carnegie Report we sound a bit old fashioned. We say that colleges need standards

not just in academic matters

But in non academic matters, too

We also suggest a term of community service learn to help students see a connection between what they learn & how they live

HIGH SCHOOL

- o Not just in academic matters
- o But in nonacademic matters, too.

Not just a school
Problem - you're
Problem

The goal, we say, is not to return to in loco parentis

- o Rather, is it to assure that all parts of the community of learning are governed by high standards.

many people
felt
unconnected to
purposes
Lack of
fun
intrinsic

- o And that students learn while still in college to fulfill their social and civic obligations.

VACHEL
LINDSAY
Worlds me crime
its B&B's crime 0/11
Saw - seldom
SERVE - no
DIE - LIKE
SOMEONE

I do not wish to romanticize the notion of "College as Community". The modern university is a culture comprised of many cultures. ~~And we must acknowledge the important fact that about~~

VACHEL LINDSAY
It is
that
unlike me
crime
B&B's

30 percent of today's undergraduates are part time and older students. - and they have other obligations.

Further
the
most
family
intrinsic
intrinsic
27th
4th
24th
7th

Still, college is more than classes & assignments.
~~But~~ ~~yet, are we content to view the nontraditional students~~ ~~as someone~~
who simply picks up credits without becoming a part of a
community of learning? → and operate on the edge of the Cooper

Carl Schorske, Professor Emeritus, of Princeton University, in a brilliant study of creative communities, describes Basel, Switzerland in the 19th century as a place where civic and university vitality were inextricably interlocked. To quote precisely, Schorske said that

VACHEL LINDSAY: It is
the worlds me crime
serve seldom never
die die - die like shop

can offer the prospect that the spirit of community will be deepened and renewed.)

Without getting sentimental, we suggest in the Carnegie Report that the college must be held together

o not just in its scholarship

o but also in the quality of its human interaction.

Thus, the problem of the American College--as we observed it--is not that the failure rate is so large, but rather that the expectations are so small.

And to revitalize the Undergraduate College we suggest strengthening the connections

o between colleges and schools)

o between the liberal and the useful arts

o between the academic and nonacademic life on campus

o and, ultimately, between what is learned and how one lives.

- o To understand the special quality of Basel's cultural creativity one must look to the university.
- o The "profession of learning," he said, was prized among the merchant families of Basel just as the priesthood was in Ireland.
- o The primary function of the university, Professor Schorske concluded, was to foster "civic culture."

If a city can be concerned about the quality of life, if merchant families can have the vision of a creative community of learning

- o is it not possible for administrators and scholars and their students ~~and trustees~~ on a college campus also to join in common cause?

With all of the divided loyalties and tugging special interests, we remain convinced that a college, at its best,

can bring together the views and experiences of separate parts,

can create something greater than the sum and

BUILD CONNECTION
BETWEEN CLASSROOM - LIFE BEYOND
MIDDLEBY SEMINARS

We proceed with the conviction that if a balance can be struck between individual interests and shared concerns a strong learning community will result.

And perhaps it is not too much to hope that the college, as a vital community of learning, can be a model for society at large--a society where private and public purposes also must be joined.

OP ~~mark~~
Vig ~~or~~

The college is ~~is~~
~~purpose~~ the natural leaders

→ offers great promise

→ current debate can be kept constructive

~~is~~
→ will continue to provide essential leadership