American Higher Education: Problems and Policies

Undergraduate Colleges. The University of Pennsylvania was once unique in this country in respect to its secular status, and it was also the first American institution which—beginning as an arts college—added a second college in the form of a medical school. Like its counterparts, however, it did not become a university until late in the nineteenth century. Since then, it has developed along lines similar to those followed elsewhere. Although no one institution is just like another and variations may be significant, Pennsylvania is fairly typical of our large, secular universities.

The stimulus which inspired universities in this country was of German origin, but the resulting programs were taken on by institutions whose forms derived from pre-existing arts colleges. Without going into the history of these colleges or of their English antecedents,¹ one may note that their cultural environment, their levels of instruction, and their administrative structures were quite different from those obtaining in the German institutions. A working combination, within American universities, of these two distinct traditions—of native forms and of foreign functions—was not easy to achieve. Some analysis of the problems involved is essential to an understanding of the present scene.

The American arts college was originally little more than a secondary school and was so viewed abroad. Its students subsequently became older and its studies more advanced, but it still exhibits some of the characteristics of the secondary level—particularly during the first two of its four years. Such colleges, for example, are still expected to act in loco parentis. When American universities set up “graduate” or advanced professional schools, the arts college found itself midway in the educational pyramid between these upper colleges and the strictly secondary level (high schools). Whether or not a university originated in an arts college, it always included one and termed the students therein “undergraduates.” Matters were further complicated by the establishment of professional or vocational colleges (business, engineering, home economics) on this same undergraduate level.

In Continental Europe, in contrast, students attend secondary schools until 18 or 19 years of age and then enter directly into professional training in universities. Although European lycées or gymnasia may be criticized for their rigidity, they have the reputation of giving a more disciplined academic education than do American secondary schools. Hence American students who go directly from high schools into university colleges of business or engineering may be less well grounded than are their European counterparts.

If it were desired, the American system could be made similar to the European in either of two ways. Students could add the first two years of arts college to their high school training and then be admitted directly to any university college—provided they did not wish to complete four
years in arts. Certain advanced professional schools (medical) now approve this sequence, which promises to save their students both time and money. And undergraduate professional schools (business, engineering) which wish to become graduate, might find the transition easier if they required for admission only two years of arts college rather than the traditional four.

If the first two arts years are organized into a "junior college," moreover, this can provide a respectable end-point for the education of those who are unable or unwilling to go further. Such a sequence, however, threatens the place of the four-year arts college and so may meet with resistance if adopted on a large scale.

As an alternative, time-saving may be effected on the elementary and/or secondary levels. Students might be advanced more rapidly through the early grades, or they could be admitted to a four-year arts college after only two years of high school. From the viewpoint of the arts college, such arrangements would have two advantages. If college standards are higher than those of high schools, the proposed sequence would bring students up to these standards at an earlier age. And, in any case, the four-year college is preserved intact. The arrangement has been tried successfully only with gifted students and is probably not applicable to others.

Resistance to the elimination of four-year arts colleges is based on more than vested interests. Just to the extent that high schools provide less effective academic training than do gymnasium, it may be held that Americans need two more years of such training (at ages 19-21) than do Europeans. Other observers, without necessarily admitting this, believe that "liberal" education is so valuable that Europeans as well
as Americans should continue it through the ages men­tioned.  

Somewhat distinct from the claims of liberal education, is the appeal which the arts college makes in terms of “college life.” Such life is compounded of various activities which are hard to disentangle. There can be real self-education within student groups, but there is also a very human and widespread desire to have a good time. Significant here is the contrast between the old literary societies and the present-day fraternities. In effect, many American colleges have become institutions whose appeal is as much or more social than it is educational in the traditional sense. Other societies cannot afford and probably have never desired to indulge large numbers of young people to this degree, and it is doubtful if American society can really afford it much longer.

One encounters, in this connection, the usual difficulty which faces those dealing with American undergraduates; namely, student indifference to learning. Woodrow Wilson once applied a stronger term here in referring to actual “resistance.” Such attitudes may be ascribed to various circumstances: to poor standards in lower schools, to lax admission requirements, to competition between academic and social values; or—more generally—to the whole nature of American society and culture. But the arts and similarly non-technical, undergraduate colleges, where student nonchalance is most apparent, must also take some of the blame.

2 Americans, during the Occupation, sought to graft the arts college on to the German system as a “bridge” between the gymnasium and the university; see O. F. Kraushaar, “New Stirrings in German Universities,” Scientific Monthly, LXXVIII (April, 1954), 201-207.

3 “College life” had an aristocratic, English background, where it was largely restricted to a privileged few at Oxford and Cambridge. It seems to have been taken over, in American colleges, in more widely distributed, somewhat democratized forms.
General pre-professional education is given, in Europe, in schools which require learning. Those who survive such schools and go on are then free to sink or swim in a professional environment. The American arts college, in contrast, continues general education until about age 21 in an environment which lacks both the discipline of the gymnasia and the motivations of professional schools. This lack of potent pressures on students from without or from within seems to be an inherent weakness.

It is sometimes claimed that the arts college, with its compromise between the rigidity of gymnasia and the freedom of European universities, at least enables students to attain “social maturity”—a view analogous to that of public school educators re the cultivation of “the whole child.” Quite apart from whether this should be a primary aim of higher education, one may question whether it is in fact realized. Do the colleges advance the social or emotional maturity of their students or do they, rather, indulge them in a somewhat prolonged adolescence?

Whatever the answer here, the indifference of many undergraduates to serious study is a fact. The phenomenon is difficult to measure and there are numerous exceptions—not only in terms of individuals but also in regard to superior colleges. But we are speaking here of rank-and-file institutions. If one doubts the generalization, let him compare the attitudes of average undergraduates with those of average students in law or in medicine.

Experience with “G.I.’s” after World War II suggests that more serious attitudes might have developed if students had been “on their own” or “out in the world” before matricula-

4 Excepting those in such technical, undergraduate schools as engineering. Recent studies have claimed, however, that there is now a trend toward serious attitude among undergraduate personnel.
tion. One can even toy with the thought that undergraduate colleges could improve the quality of student work if they would require a record of previous self-support for admission. In regard to such previous experience, the large-scale, informal systems of education in this country (within corporation, military, and adult programs) have an advantage over the formal schools. Yet the latter must serve as the base for the nation's entire educational effort.

Some faculty members combat student nonchalance, while others accept it in the course of adjusting to their environment. It could be overcome to some extent by better teaching. But in so far as this attitude persists, it pervasively undermines all schemes for making college instruction more effective.

There is no easy escape from these circumstances. No one can wave a wand and transform popular attitudes toward learning or turn high schools and colleges into gymnasia overnight—even if we wished to do this. Transformations in education usually take time. The tempo of change, nevertheless, may be quickened somewhat by impending social developments. Hence one must turn aside, at this point, in order to inquire: What are the implications of extraneous trends for higher education?

**Mass Enrollments in Undergraduate Colleges.** As everyone knows, a wave of mass enrollments has reached the high schools and is headed toward the undergraduate colleges. Since its momentum derives from a growing desire "to go to college" as well as from sheer increases in population, both higher education and secondary are about to be in-

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5 Since this was written, Dr. Herbert Scoville, Jr., of the C.I.A., has reported that Russian students—after completing a 10-year school program—are encouraged to "do a two-year interim stint in industry" before going on to "college" (a university); see Baltimore Sun, Nov. 2, 1957.
undated. It seems probable, from statistics now available, that the number of students “in colleges and universities” will about double between 1956 and 1970 (three million to six million). The prophets, of course, could be mistaken: numbers may not multiply as rapidly as is anticipated. But even if predictions prove to be twenty-five percent too high, the figures will still be impressive.

Some part of increased enrollments will consist of good students whose prototypes were denied a “college education.” But many others will wish to attend because college life is pleasant, because graduation in itself opens the door to opportunity, or just because “it is the thing to do.” (Have we not become a nation of conformists?) These motives are not new, but they will soon move greater numbers and are not calculated to produce serious students.

It may be hoped that fears on this score are exaggerated, but the experience of high schools two generations ago gives one pause. An early wave of enrollments reached this level between 1890 and 1915, and there is some evidence that it was associated with a decline in standards—among teachers as well as among students. The few public high schools of 1850 were, indeed, rather similar to the colleges of that era; and one of them, Central High in Philadelphia, still gives degrees. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they were much like gymnasia, and they suggest what might have been in American secondary education. Some of these old


7 Seen in a Philadelphia bank window: “College graduates make $75,000 more!”

8 This may not be conclusive, since one should presumably check comparative performance tests for high school students, say, of 1850 and 1915. Our assumption about the standards of the older high schools is based on the qualifications of their faculties and on their curricula.
schools survived but, after 1915, they were increasingly lost among the innumerable high schools of the now-common type.

If it is true that high school standards declined with mass enrollments, the danger that similar results will follow similar expansion on the college level cannot be ignored. No one, of course, wants that. A national committee which welcomes expansion declares, nevertheless, that “to masquerade mass production of mediocrity under the guise of higher education” would be disastrous.9 But in practice, two views emerge about the whole prospect. Some point with pride, emphasizing the values of widening opportunity and minimizing the dangers to standards. Others view with alarm and reverse the emphasis.

Most Americans probably agree that the percentage increase of those of college age who attend college (4 percent in the early 1900’s, to 28 percent in 1950) has been “a spectacular achievement.”10 They may exaggerate the distinctiveness of this trend, since many other nations are extending secondary schooling and increasing university enrollments. But until recently, at least, certain factors which permitted exacting standards in European secondary schools—class distinctions and selectivity—were barriers to mass education in the upper grades and also limited entrée to universities.11 American high schools, in contrast, provide a single high road to undergraduate colleges. Students in this country may thus postpone career decisions until they are 17 or (if they attend arts colleges) 21 years of age. In addition

9 President’s Committee on Education Beyond the High School, Second Report, July, 1957, 4.
11 For current European discussions of this problem, see, e.g., R. C. Doty’s report on France in the New York Times, July 25, 1957.
to its democratic implications, such a sequence has obvious advantages for the "late bloomers."

As far as pre-college, academic requirements are concerned, therefore, the American system makes it easier for students to keep career lines open until they are relatively mature. But one must recall that other circumstances influence the sum total of opportunity. There is evidence, for example, that higher-education costs are greater for American students than for the British or German. Whether this difference is fully counterbalanced by higher family incomes in the United States we do not know.

It is usually said, of course, that the greater percentage of college-age population enrolled in American colleges—as compared with university enrollment abroad—is final evidence of superior opportunity in this country. Yet even here one must raise questions. Can we be sure that the figures are comparable? Is the same age-group (18-21) used in both cases? If so, are data for the last two years of lycées or gymnasia (18-19) included in the total of European enrollments? And does the latter figure also include those attending certain types of vocational schools which are outside universities in Europe but inside them in the United States? But let us assume that, even with allowance for such variations, the balance indicates a higher ratio of enrollments and a correspondingly higher index of opportunity in this country.

Those who emphasize this opportunity usually assume that a large proportion of future high school graduates should "go to college." The national committee just quoted states that "at least 50 percent" of them will benefit from formal education beyond secondary school.\(^\text{12}\) Whether this relatively moderate estimate can be held to will probably

depend, later, on the manner in which economic circumstances increase or diminish admission pressures. But any attempt to set lower percentages in principle is viewed by the committee as "unrealistic," and it stoutly declares that this country will "never tolerate" an intellectual élite. 13

There are critics, nevertheless, who take a dim view of the American achievement. Mass education, they agree, has widened opportunity, has tended to unify peoples of many origins, and has benefited society by improving the training of the rank and file. But it has also, they hold, frustrated the gifted while catering to the majority. And does not present society need, more than did any preceding order, well-planned training for excellence? 14

More serious is the view that mass education, if brought up to the college level, will carry many young people beyond the point at which they are able or willing to benefit. Or, if they benefit at all, this will be accomplished only at a disproportionate cost to standards and hence to the interests of competent students.

Joseph Wood Krutch, for example, indicts mass education for discouraging non-conforming excellence, and remarks that "we are more inclined to boast how many Americans go to college than to ask how much the average college education amounts to." 15 John A. Perkins, President of the University of Delaware, refers to the "alarming idea" that nearly all high school graduates should go to college, regardless of motivation or aptitude. He adds that colleges should take warning from the experience of high schools, which now

13 President’s Committee, First Interim Report, 1956, 4 ff.
struggle with those who "should have gone to work." And a faculty committee of the University of California protests "against the current, unfortunate belief that university education is a 'must' for everybody." -

In the opinion of faculties, mediocrity as well as indifference already characterizes many undergraduates. In the Wharton School at Pennsylvania, for example, three-fourths of the faculty declare that most students are incompetent or competent only "to a moderate degree" in meeting the School's objectives. Where this is true in present colleges, rapid future expansion could easily make matters worse. If so, not only will the better students be frustrated: faculties also will suffer the consequences. The dangers are greatest, of course, in the weaker, independent colleges or in state units which must accept all high school graduates.

Private institutions may protect themselves from mediocrity by maintaining or raising entrance requirements, or by requiring high standards after admission. Yet even such measures cannot prevent the number of qualified applicants from rapidly increasing, and further complications will then ensue. Private colleges and universities have semi-public responsibilities and will feel some moral obligation to accept as many qualified students as possible.

Fears have already been aroused among high school youngsters about prospects for admission to college (particularly to a "good" college) and pressures will mount. There will be a temptation to overcrowd facilities and to overburden faculties—all in a good cause. Even if funds can be found for expansion, can the faculties themselves be found?

17 Study Committee No. 1, Fifth All-University Faculty Conference, 1950, 7.
18 M. E. Wolfgang, Wharton Faculty Attitude Survey, 1957, 86.
At some point, traditional qualifications will have to be modified if sufficient academic personnel are to be secured; even if, meantime, the ratio of students to faculty has been increased. And a modification of appointment standards may either improve or lower those standards. The danger of the latter outcome will be greatest in real universities, which have other objects beside teaching in view. More must be said on this theme under the headings of “Recruitment” and of “Appointments.”

Faced by these perplexities, some university presidents have hinted or even said out loud that they will “hold the line” against increased enrollments. Others state their intention to maintain standards but imply some hope of finding resources which will permit of expansion. Thus, President Griswold states that Yale “should not rush into bigness” but adds that “perhaps society will find means of supporting its increased demand for a Yale education.”

At Pennsylvania, meantime, President Harnwell notes the seeming incompatibility of quantity and quality but believes that these can be reconciled. “We cannot ignore the rising demands of students for a Pennsylvania education,” he states, “nor can we acquiesce in any lessened impact of Pennsylvania on the world of education. . . . At the same time, we must maintain and improve the educational tradition . . . which we cherish.” With adequate funds, he concludes, some fraction of additional, qualified applicants may therefore be admitted in conjunction with an actual improvement in student standards.

There is no doubt that an expansion of universities will be in the public interest, if they can secure the necessary funds and the qualified faculties. Although the chances for secur-

20 President’s Report, 1956, 8 ff.
ing funds are fairly good, the prospect of finding greater numbers of scholars who merit university appointments is said to be dim indeed. Even if salaries are so raised as to make academic careers more attractive, universities will meet increasing competition for expert personnel from business, government, and the professions. It is a nice question whether society is not headed toward a point where its latent "pool of brains" no longer will be sufficient to meet increasing demands.

In any case, a private university which aspires to excellence will presumably not increase its enrollments beyond a point which is consistent with the highest standards concerning students, facilities and staffs. This was the almost unanimous opinion of faculty members whom we interviewed at Pennsylvania.

Thus to limit enrollments, in some institutions, is not only consistent with democracy but is actually in its best interest. Education for intellectual leadership is at least as essential in a democracy as in any other type of society. It would be unfortunate if only private universities in this country could maintain such standards; but this will not necessarily occur, since certain state universities also may be enabled to control the size of student bodies.

The country clearly needs a limited number of institutions—let us say, twenty-five—which are universities in the best sense of the word. We are convinced that the University of Pennsylvania, in terms of tradition, resources, and present intent, belongs within this group.

Mass Opportunity and Training for Excellence. We cannot consider here, in any detail, the problems of mass education which parallel those of training for excellence. But neither can the former be dismissed outright, since what is
done about mass education in and beyond high schools has some bearing on what will occur within university colleges. By the same token, these outside trends will be of concern to university faculties. One may therefore conclude this discussion with illustrations of how mass opportunity may be reconciled with training for excellence.

Various efforts are being made, at present, to improve the work of high schools and of undergraduate colleges. But the value of most such proposals is limited by the fact that they relate to only one stage in a long sequence. Improvement of colleges does not overcome the inadequacy of high schools, nor does a reorganization of the latter have much bearing on what happens in elementary grades. Each level blames its troubles on the preceding one, and a good time is had by all except those who teach in the beginning years. Even if each level is improved in itself, problems of correlation will remain—since the whole of the educational sequence is more than the sum of its parts. Something may be accomplished, as far as undergraduate colleges are concerned, by discussions of the “transition” between high school and college, but this matter does not reach to the heart of the problem.

What seems to be needed is a reorientation concerning formal education as a whole. Education should be envisaged as a continuing process, in which what occurs on one level affects all those which follow. And the clue to reorientation is provided in the point noted above; namely, that American schools have provided opportunity for the masses at the expense of the gifted. Why not face up at all school levels to the psychological realities, by providing continuing programs for the better students as well as for the rank and file?

21 The very attention given to this matter highlights the fact that the first college years represent a continuation of secondary schooling; hence the difficulty of distinguishing, “in transition,” between the upper high school and the lower college years.
Once this view is accepted, various means for implementing it can be envisaged. The most sweeping proposal, made recently by Paul Woodring, is that we should admit bright youngsters into a four-year high school at age 11 instead of age 14; and on into a four-year undergraduate college at 15 instead of at 17 or 18. They would then be ready for graduate or professional school at 19 instead of 21. Meantime, average students could proceed somewhat more slowly, terminating their formal schooling by graduating from junior or community colleges at about 18. The third group (of slow learners) could go through early grades at a retarded pace, and could be set happily free upon completing high school at 17—or even before graduating on this level.

Some differences in curricula, as well as distinct time schedules, would probably be desirable in these three programs. Until about sixty years ago, most high schools cultivated only traditional subjects which prepared students for college. Emphasis was placed on training in the disciplines as such. But when these schools expanded by enrolling many who did not go on to college, secondary education was proudly envisaged as an end in itself. And it then appeared, to educators, that most students needed something more than—or at least something different from—the old concern about "training the mind." Objectives were broadened to include personal, social, and vocational goals, so that children could adjust to life as a whole. All this promised to serve the majority more effectively than the earlier program could have done.

Meantime, however, these trends lent themselves to the


natural inclination of youngsters to "take things easy" and have a good time. No such effort was involved in discussing personal health or civic responsibilities, as had earlier been required for some understanding of Latin or of mathematics. Discipline in learning, moreover, was intentionally relaxed in terms of "progressive education." Most handicapped in consequence, as already stated, were those students who were potentially qualified for higher education. Hence, in recent years, academic critics have urged that high schools return to old-type curricula and standards.\(^{24}\)

The ensuing controversy results, in our opinion, from the inability or unwillingness of either side to distinguish between the needs of average and of gifted students. Many educators desire the same "life adjustment" curriculum for all students, while academic critics demand an equally undiscriminating discipline for all young minds. The controversy can be resolved if here, again, there is a facing of facts. The old disciplinary program will not meet the full needs of the majority of students, and probably transcends the ability of some of them. Conversely, such programs are just what future university students do need in their secondary years. Why not strive to give each element what will best serve its own interest?

Curiously enough, however, one of the few points on which many professional educators agree with their academic critics is in viewing separate programs for the gifted as "undemocratic." The former are inclined to distrust "segregation" of this sort as socially undesirable—as making for an élite. Meantime, academic critics ("neo-conservatives") insist that all children can profit from disciplined learning in

traditional subjects, and hold that any doubt on this score reveals a lack of confidence in the common man. Each group suspects the other of betraying democracy and claims—for quite different reasons—that it alone maintains the faith of the fathers. 25

Our own view, as implied, is that democracy will be better served by adapting education to the capabilities of the children. We see nothing dangerous in restricting enrollment in certain programs to students with superior records—provided all had the same opportunity and that provision is made for the "late bloomers." Or, to put the matter in traditional American terms, we would maintain here the principles of Jeffersonian rather than of Jacksonian democracy.

It should be added, however, that the education of distinct groups need not be totally different. All children could be taught together during the early, formative years. Broad goals need not be entirely overlooked in the subsequent training of the gifted, nor need standards be entirely relaxed in the education of the majority. Some competitive processes, for example, should be maintained or re-established among this latter group, if we are to take seriously the claim that education is to prepare for life—or is to offer a normal segment of life itself. 26

If distinct programs were developed for the three student groups mentioned, mass opportunity would be preserved and the gifted would not be delayed. The four-year undergraduate college would be maintained, not for sentimental reasons, but because it has a definite place in the whole


26 Here, as so often, American schools seem the antithesis of European. In some of the latter, competition has apparently been carried to unhealthy extremes.
scheme. And in so far as this college received the better, pre-professional students, something would be done to improve undergraduate attitudes and faculty morale.

Difficulties there would be. How to overcome sentimental claims that such arrangements would be undemocratic? How and when to select the three groups and to preserve cross-over opportunities at older ages? (The latter point is vital, since an irrevocable decision at so early an age as 11 would be unfair to some children.) And how, finally, to provide for three programs within the same or in distinct schools? All such questions, moreover, must be asked within an educational environment which resists major innovations, both because it is inherently conservative and because it is subject to no centralized control. Yet the questions are not necessarily unanswerable, and education does change. Plans to restrict enrollment in universities and the expansion of junior colleges, on the one hand, and efforts to do more for gifted students in lower schools on the other, already point in the directions suggested.

Whether by intent or not, the sort of program just noted approaches the European system. The proposal that bright youngsters should go through high school and college during ages 11 to 19 offers a sequence which approximates that of the gymnasium—which was always intended for the gifted. And the arrangements suggested for average and for slow learners also have their counterparts in European schools. At first glance, then, these “revolutionary” proposals for American education seem only to return to the European tradition. But there is at least one important distinction. Selection within an American program would be based on ability, rather than on this quality in combination with social distinctions.

In a word, both European and American education have
something to offer here, in a common effort to reconcile opportunity with training for leadership. The two purposes must be distinguished, yet are not incompatible. But it will require far more intelligent planning to pursue them simultaneously than it ever did to seek only one or the other. It would seem that both European nations and this country are converging on this dual objective; the first from a tradition which long limited opportunity, and the second from a background in which excellence was often lost from view.

University Faculties and Undergraduate University Colleges. The existence of undergraduate colleges within American universities imposes problems unknown to most European institutions. If the faculties of these colleges serve primarily as teachers, the situation is similar to that obtaining in most independent colleges. This had once been the case, in some measure, even in European faculties. But during the late eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, the teacher-professor had been gradually replaced by the research man; and research (or analogous creative activities) came to be recognized as the distinctive function of a university. Faculty members continued to lecture but gave their time primarily to original work.

This pattern was well-established by the time it was taken over in the United States after 1875, when it became the basis for the new graduate schools and was also adopted in varying degrees within professional colleges. Universities could, theoretically, have set up separate graduate faculties; but because of considerations relating to finances or personnel, they appointed staffs who were expected to teach on

27 This transition varied with fields, as well as in time and place. In German medicine, e.g., it occurred between about 1850 and 1870; see, e.g., E. T. Nauck, “Die Ersten Jahrzehnte des neurologischen Unterrichts in Freiburg i. Br.,” Ber. Naturf. Ges. Freiburg, vol. 46 (1956), 73.
both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In connection with the latter, professors also devoted themselves to research. Their two functions may therefore be defined as those of undergraduate-teaching and of graduate-teaching—research. The words “teacher” or “teaching” will hereafter be used only for the first of these, and “research” for the second, unless otherwise stated.

This dichotomy most clearly obtains within the combined arts college-graduate school faculty, but it also appears within any undergraduate college—or even within any department—in the degree to which such a unit pursues both aims. The first procedure would be viewed, abroad, as of an advanced, secondary nature; the second as a university function.

Out of this situation, almost inevitably, have arisen certain difficult questions. To which function should a faculty give chief attention, for which should it be primarily trained, and what may be done with those who do not conform to prevailing emphases? Or should each function receive its due, in which case will they not compete for the greater share of staff time? Since some university men feel strongly about these matters, they may summarize them under the heading, “Teaching versus Research,” though this phrase seems a bit on the provocative side.

The old arts faculties, even within so-called universities, devoted themselves primarily to teaching, combined with such reading as they thought necessary thereto. In reaction against this after 1875, institutions which wished to become “real universities” emphasized research and gave little attention to teaching—appointing and promoting staffs accordingly. The Ph.D., with its research-training, became a requirement for appointment, and research-based publica-

28 Except in certain professional schools.
tions were equally essential for promotion thereafter. At Pennsylvania, an apparently official pamphlet advised faculty members who were absorbed in teaching to go elsewhere.

This state of affairs, established as early as about 1900, was not often challenged prior to the 1940's. But since then, it has come increasingly under attack, both from college authorities and from professors of education who had long cast critical eyes at college teaching. The reaction may be viewed in part as the usual swing of the pendulum, but it also picked up momentum in response to the enrollment pressures already mentioned. If undergraduate colleges are to be swamped with students, is it not necessary to re-examine all aspects of their teaching obligations?

A strong case may be made for this view, both on pragmatic grounds and on principle. Pragmatically, "college teachers" must be recruited and trained, and there will never be enough of them if they must all "take" Ph.D.'s. May their training not actually be improved by preparation which is not so lengthy, but which envisages the teaching function for which most of them will be employed? And since personnel shortages are feared, methods must be sought for making the most of this "scarce resource." Meantime, in principle, there is a moral obligation to provide undergraduates with the most effective teaching possible.

All these points seem applicable to independent, undergraduate colleges; but, unfortunately, those who present them rarely consider the peculiar needs of university col-

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leges. Moreover, present enthusiasm for the teaching role carries some critics to the extreme of deprecating or even ridiculing research. They accord the latter some lip service, but have more to say about the sins committed in its name. Much research, as judged by resulting publications, is indicted as dull, repetitive and trivial. Not only is it "pointless" in itself, but the pressure to publish results early "is a main cause of uninspired, ineffective and . . . unscholarly teaching." 30

Such comments certainly raise the spectre of "teaching versus research," as far as conventional publications are concerned, though it rarely occurs to the critics that this argument cuts both ways. Will not the pressures of routine teaching, within a university, make for uninspired or trivial research? At any rate, we are assured that there is no natural conflict here—no real dichotomy. Some academic men are said to "do research" and "publish" the results by teaching; while others do it and publish through printed materials. Some are "teaching scholars," the others "writing scholars." And of the two, it is claimed that non-writers communicate scholarship "more widely—even perhaps more fully and intelligibly" than do those who rely "on the uncertain device of distributing reprints." Indeed, "our confidence in the magic of print" might be shaken if we knew "how soon, how well, and how widely the contents of those 'little articles' are known . . ." 31

In a word, many research-based publications (in the usual sense) are not only considered trivial: they are said to reach a smaller audience than does research-based teaching. Here comparison is made between minor or inferior publications,

31 Ibid., 17.
on the one hand, and good teaching on the other. Imagine
the reverse, if one compared inferior teaching with the bet-
ter publications!

Meantime, the dichotomy is still there under new names:
“teaching scholars” and “writing scholars.” This terminology
has the merit of implying that the first type may be as worthy
of respect as the second. There is a qualitative distinction
even here, however, since the “scholarship” of writers is ex-
posed more directly to outside, professional criticism than
is that of teachers. The latter may be scholarly and effective
or they may not, but even in the latter case they usually “get
by”; whereas the writer must meet at least minimal stand-
ards of industry and intelligence. Laziness is not unknown
among college teachers but can hardly be ascribed to prolific
writers.

A more serious distinction relates to the respective audi-
cences of the two groups; the first reaching immature stu-
dents, the second the world of learning. The first function is
shared by all undergraduate faculties, the second is the dis-
tinctive function of university (that is, “graduate”) faculties.
If it were not for this second activity, universities would
lose their chief raison d’être. Thus it is quite proper and
desirable that university staff members should be known
first for their publications or the equivalents in creative
work. Discussions which lump all “college teachers” together
ignore this peculiar responsibility of university-college facul-
ties.\textsuperscript{32} And pleas that such faculties should give as much (or
more) attention to undergraduate teaching as to original
work, may undermine the research tradition so painfully
built up in this country a half-century ago.

\textsuperscript{32} There are, of course, a number of superior, independent colleges
whose faculties do considerable writing and guide some graduate work. To
the extent that this is done, such institutions are taking over the university
function.
The policy which a real university should follow, in confronting the respective claims of teaching and of research, can be stated quite simply. Every effort should be made to improve teaching within the limits set by the primary obligation to research. By the same token, any program to improve teaching which will inhibit research—for example, staffing a department largely with “scholar-teachers” rather than with “scholar-writers”—should be suspect. The implementation of this policy, of course, is far from simple, and this will be discussed below under “Teaching” and “Research.”

Some critics may conclude that, if such a policy is followed, university undergraduate teaching will become inferior to that in independent colleges.33 This point remains a matter of opinion, however. Some are confident that the able research man is almost automatically a good teacher; and, what is more, that teachers gradually become ineffective if they do not “do research.” If so, university teaching has an advantage. But others are equally convinced that some research men make dull teachers, and claim further that good teachers can “stay alive” without bothering with publications.

Most faculty members interviewed at Pennsylvania took the first of these views, but a minority upheld the second. The truth is, we have no objective data by which to compare them: each observer is apparently swayed by instances which he recalls—one way or the other. But note that in a university which has rewarded only research, good, non-writing teachers have not often survived and so do not come within the view of colleagues. Majority opinion in independent colleges might be more favorable toward such men.

33 The great majority of the latter report that they give primary heed to teaching; as, for example, in promotion policies.
One may hold, nevertheless, that there is no clear case against university teaching as compared to that in independent colleges. In the first place, much can and should be done to improve the former, within the limits of the policy stated above. In the second place, although in our opinion there are some dull "scholar-writers," there are many others whose originality is stimulating to good students. Hence it is not surprising that certain outstanding arts colleges are located within universities.

There remains the question whether, in the interest of research faculties, it would be better to disassociate them altogether from undergraduate teaching. This could be done in either of two ways. The first would be to assign some faculty members to only undergraduate teaching, thus relieving others for exclusively graduate instruction. The line between the two groups could be drawn within departments, or it could separate entirely distinct college and graduate school faculties.

A separation of faculties would be difficult in the case of a university whose staff had long been accustomed to operating on both levels. Some tensions might result if professors in arts college departments were pulled out and organized into a graduate school staff, while their colleagues were assigned to a separate, undergraduate faculty. There would then be two departments in each field, one having greater prestige than the other.

The most feasible procedure here, therefore, is gradually to assign a few department members to an exclusively grad-

34 Some scholars may wish to avoid, temporarily or permanently, all teaching responsibilities—even with graduate students. Such men, if not free-lances, may find refuge in research institutes; but a university, as such, is committed by tradition to some sort of teaching function. In so far as a university sets up exclusively research chairs, it is becoming another type of institution and such chairs should therefore be viewed as exceptional.
uate function. As a corollary, the non-writing but able teacher (who occasionally appears within a university college) could be assigned entirely to undergraduate teaching. This could be done without formal distinctions and within existing departments. Such an arrangement is approached now in departments in which certain men, usually senior in rank and age, work primarily on the graduate level. Moreover, room could be made, in any large department, for men who are qualified to do both undergraduate and graduate teaching. The senior man who is able and willing to teach a general course is an asset to any department.

A more drastic means for relieving research faculties from teaching would be to abandon university undergraduate colleges altogether. Professional or vocational colleges which have been undergraduate could survive by moving up to the graduate level—a step already taken by schools of business and of education in certain universities. This process would be made easier, as mentioned, if such schools accepted the graduates of junior as well as of four-year arts colleges. If, meantime, the university arts college were closed, the university would then operate only on a graduate-professional level in the European manner.

Logically, such a program is appealing. There would be no further straddling of secondary and advanced educational levels, fewer worries about “teaching versus research,” and less concern about the attitudes of immature students. About seventy-five years ago, several American institutions—Catholic University, Johns Hopkins, Clark—seem to have had this ideal in mind, but it did not materialize in the American setting.

The great obstacle to so drastic a reorganization is, of course, the arts college itself. Unlike undergraduate professional schools, this unit by definition could not move up to
graduate status: its functions could only be abandoned to independent colleges. Yet, to abolish the university arts college would involve a multitude of difficulties. Most obvious would be that of unscrambling the faculty, many of whom would no longer be needed. Moreover, the alumni—with their memories of "college days"—would be alienated, and their reactions might dry up sources for university funds. Even the general public would be disturbed if it saw universities taking such action just when mass enrollments demand all the arts colleges which can be maintained.

The university arts college, despite its inherent weaknesses and the complications which its existence imposes, seems too thoroughly implanted to be uprooted in the near future. Whether its hold will eventually be loosened by the growth of junior colleges or whether it will survive in a sort of gymnasium-sequence for gifted students is a problem which is not peculiar to university colleges. Meantime, in most institutions, it is more feasible to distinguish graduate and undergraduate functions within the present university framework than it would be to disrupt that framework altogether.

The Government of Universities. American universities differ from the foreign not only in their relations to lower schools and to levels of instruction, but also in terms of administration or management.

Since most European universities are state institutions and derive funds from ministries of education, the latter have exercised—to a degree varying with different times and places—considerable influence over university conditions and policies. The development of research in German universities after 1850, however, was paralleled by increasing Lehrfreiheit and quasi-independence from the ministries. Moreover, even if the minister of education was an influential figure, his
post was external to the universities and he could hardly wield the control which might have been exercised by a local official. There were, indeed, no intramural administrative officers other than honorary rectors and secretarial aides. Policy decisions, including appointments, were largely in the hands of professors who acted through some sort of council or senate.

This German pattern was similar to that established in other European states, for example, in Italy. Some variations on it existed in particular countries, however, as in England and in The Netherlands. The old English universities were private institutions, and some municipal universities developed in that country and elsewhere. In England and in The Netherlands, moreover, superior councils (made up wholly or in part by laymen) were given ultimate, legal authority over universities. In the former country, local administrative officers appeared—vice chancellors, registrars, and principals. But the latter exercised influence through bodies which also represented faculties, instead of acting independently of the staffs. As for the superior councils or "courts," these bodies simply approved faculty recommendations except in rare instances when public or national policy seemed to be involved. As the rector of Belfast University recently put it, power in British universities moves up from below.35

When one speaks of faculties in this context, it should be remembered that only professors are indicated. Lower ranks, such as English lecturers or German privat dozenten, rarely had any share in institutional government. This situation was not particularly undemocratic in times and places where

most of the faculties were of senior rank; that is, within universities which recruited professors from *lycées* or *gymnasia* and so had few junior-rank men of their own. The latter arrangement, parenthetically, implied a quality in secondary school faculties which can rarely be obtained when—as in the United States—there is almost no transfer of personnel from secondary to higher education.

Wherever a body of lower-rank men grew up within a university, however, “faculty rule” of the sort described meant a rule of all the staff by professors. At best, this provided an enlightened oligarchy; at worst, a sort of gerentocracy. Senior men, of course, tend to dominate any institution. But in order to check this, conscious attempts have been made in England to bring lower university ranks into the administrative pattern and these efforts seem to have been moderately successful.  

At first glance, nevertheless, European universities seem less democratic than American in this matter of lower-rank participation in faculty affairs. The latter, for example, commonly admit all or nearly all ranks to department meetings, college faculties, and even to university senates. How far junior ranks really participate in determining faculty policies in this country is another matter. Practice varies widely from college to college and from department to department.

Americans were quite aware of European patterns when they set about creating universities after 1875. But little heed was given to these forms because a homemade plan for higher education was already at hand in the arts college—an institution governed by a lay board. Now, the early American college had been a small, relatively simple institution, easily

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understood by resident trustees. And as long as this was the case, trustees exercised direct oversight—the president being little more than the chief (and sometimes, only) professor. But as a college became larger and more complicated, the governing board could no longer follow all operations and depended more and more on the president’s guidance. Meanwhile, in the stronger colleges, secular trends reduced the proportion of clergy (who had known much about the earlier education) on the boards, and increased the proportion of business men and lawyers (who knew relatively less about the new education). This shift further encouraged trustee dependence on presidents. The net result was a delegation of much trustee authority to the chief administrative officer.

This type of government was familiar to those who founded American universities, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world to adopt it in the new institutions. Even “state universities” modeled themselves on the older arts colleges, although their presidents had to deal with legislatures as well as with trustees.

Since presidents, in effect, held final power over appointments and policies, they could dominate colleges or universities in a manner quite unknown abroad. German critics, astonished by this phenomenon, referred to the American university president as an *autoritativer Führer*.

But the situation seemed normal enough to American trustees, many of whom looked upon a university as analogous to a business corporation.

In due time, as universities expanded, presidents delegated some of their powers in turn to administrative associates. A hierarchy of vice-presidents, provosts, deans, and other of-

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37 Prof. Brandl of the Univ. of Berlin, writing in *Deutsche Rundschau*, April, 1907; quoted in J. McK. Cattell (Ed.), *University Control*, N. Y., 1933, 398.
ficials appeared, some members of which dealt with business affairs, others with the educational. These officers, who might or might not be academic men, usually received higher salaries and possessed greater public prestige than did the professors. In any case, they became a distinct group, and a dichotomy appeared in terms of “administration and faculty.” Some presidents consulted more frequently with a “cabinet” of associates than they did with professors.\(^{38}\)

On the lowest rung of the administrative ladder were the departmental “heads” or “chairmen.” These men had responsibilities for their respective units and worked with deans in this connection, but they also served as professors among their peers. They functioned, to use a military analogy, as the “non-coms” of the university hierarchy, and provided the most direct contact between administrative officers and the faculty rank and file.

Running counter to other administrative trends, meantime, was a tendency to grant certain powers to faculties—particularly to those in the stronger institutions. The attainment of considerable faculty control resulted, in some instances, from the relatively independent position of certain academic groups. This situation was most obvious in strong professional schools where staff members were not necessarily dependent on colleges for income or professional standing.

Professor Lon Fuller of Harvard University observes, in this connection, that law schools in general “rank high among university departments in their capacity for self-government”; and he adds that “among the leading law schools of the United States it is unlikely that any would be found to

equal the Law School at the University of Pennsylvania in that capacity.” 39

Professor Fuller believes that legal training in itself makes for autonomy in law school faculties and this may well be true. But the analogous position of some medical faculties suggests that there are other factors making for relative independence. “Self-government,” it is true, is a more complex matter in large medical colleges than in small law schools. In the latter, as at Pennsylvania, the staff is often limited in number and is made up largely from upper ranks, so that they can determine policies in a democratic manner. In a medical faculty, in contrast, control is usually centered in a more or less select council of senior men.

Even so, the central group in a medical faculty is apt to be more autonomous than are similar bodies in other colleges. The School of Medicine at Johns Hopkins, for example, is largely governed by the board of professors (permanent department heads) whose recommendations are transmitted to and practically always approved by the trustees. Authority in this situation moves up from below, as in the British universities. That such arrangements are conducive to—or at least consistent with—the highest standards, has been evident in the reputation of medical schools of this character.

In most university or independent colleges, however, power was granted from above; as when trustees extended to faculties control over such matters as teaching methods, curricula, and degrees in course. It was also customary for recommendations on appointments or promotions to origi-

39 Report on the Law School, Univ. of Penna. Educational Survey, 1957, p. 3. Because of this relative autonomy, the Law School must be considered an exception to some of the comments on administration at Pennsylvania which will be made in ensuing chapters.
nate within departments, although presidents or deans re-
served a right to veto or to initiate such recommendations in
some instances.

The administrative view seemed to be that obviously edu-
cational matters should be left to the faculties, but that
larger issues—and especially those involving funds—belonged
in the hands of officers and trustees. This was considered a
reasonable position because of the financial responsibilities
assumed by officials and also in view of the traditional im-
practicality of professors.

There was, nevertheless, some ambiguity in these assump-
tions. If faculties were to participate in decisions on
educational policy, where did one draw the line between
items which involved such policy and those which did not?
Significant educational issues can lurk behind non-educa-
tional façades—in such areas, for example, as athletics,
budgets, and new buildings. Hence, a faculty whose influ-
ence is limited to strictly pedagogical matters may be ex-
cluded from what—in the long run—are vital educational
decisions.

Faculty influence was further limited by their lack of ac-
cess, in most institutions, to the final source of authority in
the trustees. Alumni were often represented on boards but
not the professors, although the latter obviously knew far
more about institutional problems. Alumni were welcomed
for their outside moral and financial support, while the dis-
inclination to appoint professors—or even to work directly
with them—probably can be explained by the persistence of
the business corporation analogy. Would it not be embar-
raging to have “employees” present at directors’ meetings,

40 This, in itself, was a gain for the faculties since there had been a day
when presidents and even trustees dealt directly with curricula, text books,
and the like.
even as it would embarrass professors if students sat in on your conclaves? Actual practice varied somewhat, for faculties were represented on the board of one large university, and, in a few others, trustee committees set up direct contacts with faculties in circumscribed areas. In still other cases, committees of trustees and faculties worked together on particular problems. But in many institutions, the president was the chief or even sole point of contact between faculties and the board. Since trustees were usually laymen, they depended much on the president's opinion in educational affairs, and the latter might or might not fully present faculty opinions to his board. This was difficult to accomplish, even if there was every intention of doing so.

The president thus occupied a unique and commanding position. As the chief agent and symbol of administrative power, indeed, his status provides a clue to both the virtues and the limitations of the American type of university government. These two aspects of the situation merit, in conclusion, some brief consideration.

The American system of university government has, in our opinion, certain distinct merits. It may relieve the academic staff from routine burdens and responsibilities. More important, it sets up officials whose main concern is to plan for the university—or for a college or a department—as a whole. If a college or a department is weak, there is someone—either inside or out—who can do something about it. Moreover, as in any complex body, decisions can be made and implemented more promptly if responsibility is centered in designated hands. These circumstances make possible a dy-

41 There is such student representation in a few foreign universities.
dynamic type of leadership, the value of which is amply attested by what able presidents, deans, and chairmen have been able to do for their respective universities, colleges, and departments.

The American system also occasions difficulties. The boundaries between administrative and faculty authority are often ill-defined and faculties may fear to tread in this no man’s land. If so, there may be frustration which leads, in turn, to a sense of grievance. A wise administrator, of course, consults the staff widely and avoids head-on collisions with faculty opinion. There is nothing in the system as such, however, which prevents a president who is so disposed from largely ignoring faculty opinion or from directly opposing it. In such cases, serious tensions may develop which—either openly or insidiously—undermine the morale of an institution.

Such rifts between administrators and faculties do not, fortunately, represent the normal course of university affairs. But the danger of them is inherent in the system, since faculties usually have no control over the appointment of administrative officers on the upper levels. A president for whom a faculty has great respect may be replaced at any time by one with whom they cannot work in harmony.

Even when administrators consult faculties, they may reserve major policy decisions to themselves. In this case, if general relations are harmonious and adequate salaries and working conditions prevail, most faculty members will feel no grievance. A few will prefer it this way, not wishing to

43 For a current example of open conflict, see Statement by the President to the Faculty and Staff of Emory University, 1957. This refers to actions of some faculty members as “reprehensible and intolerable,” and as involving “sabotage” and a desire to become “dictators.” It concludes with the statement that “we” do not have to submit to being “pushed around . . ., knifed in the back and falsely . . . accused—by anybody.”
spare time from appointed tasks for college or university affairs. Yet, even the latter may object if they are expected to give time to the forms of faculty participation without the substance—which is what sometimes occurs.

This situation, though it produces no open tensions, does deny to the university whatever cumulative wisdom the faculties could muster in actually sharing in the decision-making process. The more a decision involves educational policy, directly or indirectly, the more serious this denial appears to be.

Within any faculty which finds itself in this position, moreover, certain minor but annoying phenomena are apt to appear. Pro- and anti-administration groups may emerge on one or more administrative levels. Within the former will be those who aspire themselves to administrative posts. Such aspiration is normal enough under the circumstances and is, indeed, to be encouraged within limits. It is highly desirable that administrators dealing with educational matters should be academic men. Yet this sort of thing may complicate “faculty politics,” and administrators may find it difficult to distinguish between friends and sycophants.

The lack of faculty participation in major decisions, on many campuses, is projected large onto the national scene. The most striking aspect of national planning for higher education is the absence of college or university professors from the deliberations. The personnel of the many committees, commissions, or conferences which have been organized over the last decade in this field—whether by government, educa-

44 Several of the arts college faculty whom we interviewed at Pennsylvania expressed this viewpoint.

45 It is often taken for granted that American professors are constantly “competing for advancement” to administrative posts; see, e.g., C. Bowman, *The College Professor in America*, unpublished thesis, Univ. of Penna., 1938, 102.
tional bodies, or foundations—consists almost entirely of admin­istrators or laymen. One gathers that there is no felt need, in planning higher education at a critical juncture, for hearing from the ablest scholars and scientists in the land. Such an attitude is hardly conceivable in other Western nations.

One may sum up by saying that university government in the United States has gained something of the efficiency of corporation management and that this stands it in good stead in a day of complex operations. In the process, however, something of the faculty guild tradition has been lost. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to state that American universities have never realized, to the degree attained abroad, the traditional ideal of a university as a community of scholars.

Other learned professions in this country, notably law and medicine, largely control their own policies and activities; but the academic profession—which trains all the others—possesses such influence in only a very limited degree. The situation may be ascribed, no doubt, to the circumstance that academic men serve within institutions and are not self-employed. Lawyers and physicians who work for large organizations also lose much of their independence. But the fact remains that European faculties maintain a greater degree of autonomy within universities than do the American.46

46 This is occasionally denied; e.g., W. H. Cowley, professor of higher education at Stanford, asserted recently that European universities have “in some instances” much stricter controls (over faculties) than have American; and added that the American professor “is infinitely more free” to operate than are young men “teaching in any university in England.” The evidence for this was not stated at the time; see Expanding Resources for College Teaching, Amer. Council on Education Studies No. XX, 1956, 73.