

## CHAPTER 21

### THE COLLEGE AND THE INDIVIDUAL

**H**OW effectively is your institution serving each individual student? What are the factors that make the college education of an individual worthwhile? A great many students seem to profit but little from their college course. Why? Could it be true at your college?

Assuming that all the students at your college have selected their college wisely, they are not all alike in their individual needs or aims. Every college is today a very complex organization, designed to render a large variety of services. Is your college properly staffed and well organized to serve each student so that his education there will be most worthwhile to him and to our country?

There is much talk in every college about the individual, but with increasing complexity within institutions, and with increasing numbers of students, one finds much evidence that the education of a majority of students is less worthwhile than the generous facilities of our colleges would seem to warrant. There is an increasing tendency to disregard individual differences and treat all very much alike. Curricula and courses are too often shaped to suit professorial convenience and departmental ambition. Variations from regularity are regarded as undesirable. There is a great tendency to shape all to a common form. The able are crowded into it and the weak are stretched to fill it as best may be.

The individual personality is the most precious thing in the world. The college does not do its job well unless it gets behind the reserve of each student; discovers his strengths and weaknesses, his hopes, ambitions, and aims; and so far as

possible develops and guides them in such a manner as to enrich and strengthen and bring to full flower the noblest personality that is in him. This is most desirable but very difficult.

The following questions relative to your college will tend to show where its services to the individual are most satisfactory, and where least satisfactory. The following questions refer to each individual student:

1. *Who knows him?* A parent is entitled to assurance that someone in authority in the college will really become acquainted with his son or daughter. Someone worthwhile on the staff, who has understanding and sympathy and high scholarly ideals should certainly be acquainted personally and rather intimately with each student.

2. *What is usefully known of his background?* Much is recorded on papers and cards, filed here and there. Much is often available, but how much about his background is at the finger-ends of the faculty persons responsible for knowing and guiding him?

3. *What is known of his ability to do college work?* Did he do creditably in high school—graduate in the upper quarter, or at least in the upper half of his class? What is his scholastic aptitude score? Does it warrant expectation of success in college? If these indications are unpromising, are there definite reasons to think the student's determination to succeed is great enough to surmount all handicaps? If not why has he been admitted to a college course which he is probably unable to complete? After he has been in college for one or two quarters, if he shows by his work lack of reasonable promise of success, due to inability, lack of interest, or other cause, is he dropped promptly or retained in class as a burden to the teacher and competent classmates and at a disadvantage to himself? Or, if he is retained, are courses provided at his ability and such as will be truly useful to him?

4. *What is known of his vocational aims, and whether they are suited to his abilities?* If his aims seem reasonable and if he is doing creditable work, well. If not, much can be learned through generally accepted tests, which will give helpful guidance. Are these tests given to students whose vocational aims seem questionable?

5. *Is this the best college for him all considered?* Certainly the college is for the boy and not the boy for the college. Every college has its strength and its limitations. After becoming acquainted with this boy, his abilities and aims, are the proper authorities satisfied that this college can serve him well? If not, have they told him so and discussed with him other colleges that might serve him better? If not, why not?

6. *Is he enrolled carefully each term in the best courses for him to pursue, all things considered?* Or is he registered in a routine way by an uninterested official, drafted for service on registration day? While the curricula provided by the faculty are usually well planned to serve the average, capable student, they do not usually serve well either the very superior student or the student much below the average. Are the true interests and needs of the student, or conformity to a rigid prescription, most important at your college?

7. *What about his health?* Is each student given a physical examination by a competent physician? Are all doubtful cases followed by further examinations and conferences? Are any weaknesses pointed out and talked over in a helpful way? Are further physical examinations given each year? Is it certain that adequate health measures of all kinds are taken and that each student graduating is in the best health possible considering his condition on admission?

8. *Is he in suitable sports and are any defects in posture or physical development being corrected by suitable exercises?* A student's sound physical development and his fine sense of sportsmanship are most important. Is your college doing all it should to develop

them? Are you offering facilities for a wide enough variety of sports to interest all students, the strong and the frail? Or are all your physical education efforts directed toward turning out winning teams and earning large gate receipts?

9. *Is his social life at college such as to develop him to suitably fill the type of position he should later occupy?* Life in a dormitory or fraternity house can be such as to make a real contribution to the social development of the residents. Are your dormitories and fraternities so run? What is being done for the social development of those living in rooming houses? A very able man, qualified by training and ability for large service, can be greatly handicapped by lack of social experience.

Is the social example of members of the faculty such as tend to develop the best social ideals and practices in the students?

10. *Is he adequately housed and fed and has he sufficient resources for his minimum needs?* Are the housing and boarding facilities available to students good and reasonably priced? If not, why not? Are students, with inadequate funds allowed to ruin their health in pursuit of an education? Aid should be available to help those of real ability and needing help.

11. *If he is earning part or all his expenses, is his labor for support and his college work so balanced that he is profiting the most possible under all circumstances?* A surprising proportion of college students earn all their expenses, and a great many earn part. Students differ greatly in stamina, resourcefulness, and rapidity in learning. Many attempt too much and in the end neither earn a comfortable living nor make creditable grades. Certainly all such should be protected from injuring their health, or needlessly failing in college, by a reduction in college work carried, to such amount as can be carried profitably with the necessary labor load. At Berea College, where all students labor, 60 hours is regarded as a maximum week's work, and no

student is permitted to enter upon a course of study and a labor load which combined require over 60 hours a week.

12. *Is he growing in integrity, in dependability—in every aspect of character—at your college, so that on graduation you can conscientiously recommend him as a man?* Are all the professors and instructors at your college men of high character, men who set a fine example before your students? Are the regulations of the college such as to maintain a fine type of student life? Is the standard of honesty in all classwork and in examinations high? Do the fraternities maintain high standards of character? Does the general temper of classroom instruction tend to build up high standards of character? Are all administrative and official actions of the college on a high level of honor and integrity such as will tend to give a high value to nobility of character on the campus?

13. *Has he grown in his religious life, and is his religious anchorage stronger than when he entered college?* Is the religious attitude of the members of the faculty wholesome? Are lectures and all teaching friendly and cordial to true religious faith? Are the churches stimulating and helpful to students? Are courses that are given in psychology, philosophy, and religion such as to build up rather than to tear down religious faith?

14. *Has he grown in culture, in breadth of knowledge, in appreciation of the beautiful in art, music, and literature, and has a foundation been laid on which further growth can be expected to fit him for his future position in life?* Does his curriculum demand some breadth of education? Is his interest stimulated outside of vocational lines? Is there a cultural atmosphere about the college that contributes to this side of the student's life?

15. *Does the college follow each graduate out into the world and aid him in securing his first job, or in entering on his graduate, or professional course?* The college and university graduates many students yearly at large cost. Each graduate should surely be worth placing in a suitable position to begin his service

to the public and the world. It is certainly an important duty of the college to assist her graduates to their first appointment. Does your college do this well?

While no college could answer all the above questions favorably, not one of them is unreasonable. Each individual student should be served as suggested above. While their consideration may lead to the discovery of some special weaknesses in your college, as a whole they go to emphasize what a difficult and many-sided undertaking college education really is. Nowhere is it perfectly done. In no place is every individual properly served. Every institution has far to go to reach even acceptable excellence.

It remains the high duty of each trustee, and of each administrative officer to see that his institution has moved forward toward greater perfection of service, and not backward, during the period of his responsibility.