

For Improved Education at Oregon--A Forum

Major Problems Of Classwork Discussed by 6

The Oregon Daily Emerald presents a special symposium discussion of the question, "How to Improve Education at the University of Oregon."

On the symposium today we have representatives from all the classes on the University ladder from freshman to graduate. We are Greeks and Independents; honors students and average students; campus leaders and campus followers.

Your chairman is Bill Byrd, graduate in education.

A Socialized Plan To Build Character

Byrd: Glancing through our University catalogue we came to the page that said:

"The development of character is regarded as a primary aim in education and is emphasized at all the Oregon state institutions of higher education."

Our first speaker, Bill Carey, has chosen to direct a critical eye at this stated aim, and to examine just what the University is, or is not doing to develop the character of its students. Mr. Carey:

Improved Education

Carey: Our purpose in conducting this forum on education is so that we, as students, might contribute our share toward the goal of improved education on this campus. Day by day improvements are being made, but there is one aspect of our educational program that is being neglected.

The aspect that I speak of is the greater utilization of the socialized class procedure. By this I mean the use of panels, forums, reports, debates, discussions, and question sessions. Some courses because of their nature, such as the speech courses, naturally lend themselves to this technique.

But, other than in the speech department, in my two years at the University, I have had only six professors who utilized the socialized type of classroom study.

Socialized Study Preferred

And yet from a little personal poll of my own I found that of over 200 students that I questioned, more than three-fourths of them stated they received more enjoyment and true value from the socialized type of study than any other.

Straight lecture and note-taking classes were the most unpopular with the students that I questioned. They said that it was the lack of participation that made the lecture and note-taking classes so dull and uninteresting.

Actual participation by the student requires greater study, creates higher interest, and entails more enlightened thinking. Just listening to a lecture and taking notes and then memorizing the material before a test creates no interest and requires very little thought.

Insures Responsibility

Socialized class study is one of the best ways to insure that our responsibility to the student of tomorrow is fulfilled. If we are to guarantee that a college education is not used as the drunken man uses the lamp-post—for support, rather than for illumination, then we must face the facts.

The prevailing wind of practicality has finally reached the



A CRITICAL EYE was cocked at education, University of Oregon style, by these students when they gathered around a microphone and tape-recorder for two hours. Selected by the editorial staff of the Emerald, they are left, to right: Henry Panian, graduate student in history; Bill Carey, senior in business administration; Panel Chairman Bill Byrd, graduate in education; Jo Anne Gilmore, senior in English; Al Karr, freshman in pre-journalism, and Virginia Wright, junior in sociology. (Photo by Bond).

campuses of this country.

Courses are becoming more specialized in nature and utilitarian in purpose. Where then is the individual to turn in order to find and gain the deep rich driving power upon which a successful and meaningful life depends.

Crux of Problem

It is here that we actually find the crux of the problem, because it must be the obligation of an educational program to develop and mold a person's character—and not just to send him out into the world like a machine loaded with memorized facts and theories.

...

Panian: How do you propose to adopt the socialized procedure with large classes?

Carey: One of the best ways is to split up your class sections, offering your classes at various times when you can cut down the number of students per teacher, or maybe to get more teachers if that's necessary.

Concerns Budget

Panian: Don't you think the budget is the reason why there aren't more teachers and smaller classes on this campus. Do you think these large classes could be broken up into small groups... and work independently on projects?

Carey: I definitely do, Hank. It's done in a number of classes which lend themselves to it naturally. But I don't think there's actually an attempt by professors to put things on a socialized basis. If largeness is the question, I would rather see fewer people attend college and they themselves receive a better education than have maybe thousands more going out every year, but not going out qualified.

Experiments in High Schools

Byrd: It's interesting to note that some of our high schools have been experimenting with these techniques for a number of years—and also universities in other parts of the country have

had various degrees of success, and of course, we have done some of it here at Oregon.

Karr: Just how would the socialized study system improve character more than the lecture system?

Carey: It's through intelligent thinking and interest that you're going to mold this character. In straight lecture classes, I don't think you get that interest. You go out of the classes null and void... whereas in classes where you participate, you go out thinking.

...

We'll Take Grades, But Correct Curve

Byrd: Our next major topic is that of grades and the grading system. In profs' offices, bull sessions, and fire-sides there are few topics as controversial as that of grades. "Grades be hanged!" say some employers. "I want to know what you did at college." "Symbolic rewards that motivate study," say some of the psychologists.

Second Article

The last half of the forum will discuss professors as teachers or scholars, and faculty-student relations at the University of Oregon. It will be printed in Monday's Emerald.

Here to discuss the problem of grades is Virginia Wright.

Wright: It seems that for evaluative and incentive purposes, there is no alternative but to have grading in some form or another. But it seems to me that the program at Oregon could be changed in several ways so that the evils of grading would be minimized without sacrificing the advantages. There are two main areas that I would like to discuss.

Overemphasis on Competition

First, I don't think it's neces-

sary to place such great emphasis upon the competitive aspect of scholarship. The purpose of a college should be to provide the student with an opportunity for self-development, broadened understanding, professional training, etc., within the limits of his capacity.

I think that the use of the curve is abused in many cases. It seems questionable to me that it is sound to flunk the 12 percent that happen to fall at the bottom of the curve. But in cases where the class is small, where the distribution does not fall into a curve, or where the distribution is very high, I don't feel that the curve should be used at all.

If we are really interested in producing scholars, then the grades are of secondary importance and should be treated as such. By secondary, I mean that a student might, for instance, get a C for effort and interest even though he didn't happen to do as well as others in the class.

Cheating A Problem

Lastly, the problem of cheating. Students cheat because they want to make a grade, and because, if they don't get caught, they will be rewarded for cheating by receiving a higher grade than they otherwise might have.

It is probably impossible that we might ever do away with the incentive to cheat. But at least we might control the opportunities. Some rules for professors might include:

Don't use the same tests year after year.

Avoid mimeographed tests that can get out before exam time.

Substitute essay exams for objective ones wherever possible.

In courses where it is practical, let the students construct their own essay questions.

Grading Necessary

To sum up: If we agree that there is a necessity for evaluation of work and a certain value in rewarding the student for

Daily Emerald Panel Reveals Many Proposals

work well done, then grades seem to be a necessary part. However, in order to encourage the student in studying for the sake of learning and to discourage cheating, there should be intense competition, less emphasis upon grades and credit, and fewer opportunities to cheat.

Panian: You talk of the Virginia. Do you know of a suitable substitute?

Wright: I don't see anything wrong with using the curve. It's used with metry and realization of its limitations. I have to cull the A's from the I suppose, but I just can't see business of cutting off the bottom 12 percent when those students may be the ones who are the hardest, but they just happen to be in a class where they have the native ability to compete with the other students. Evaluation doesn't necessarily mean material that you can back on a test paper.

Grade On Effort

Gilmore: Has there ever been any method worked out to get on effort as well as on results?

Wright: I think this would be rather difficult in some cases, but last term I took a course where we were allowed to do whatever reading we wanted. We were graded on the basis of what we seemed to have learned at the end of the term's reading. I heard it suggested that the professor might give a test at the end of the term, and then allow us to see the difference.

Byrd: One experience I had, Virginia. There were many perfect and good papers, a test that irrespective of work, some were just short given E's.

Wright: That's what I mean about abusing the curve.

Byrd: Would you suggest we have a refresher course in testmaking?

Wright: Possibly.

Honors Needs Help, And So Do Advisers

Byrd: For a number of years leading educators have criticized higher education and Oregon is no exception for its regimentation of individuals of different levels of ability into the same program. The former president of Swarthmore has called this the "academic lock-out"—bad for the poorest and wasteful for the best.

Here at Oregon the attempt to deal with this problem is the honors program and the student-faculty adviser system which Jo Anne Gilmore has chosen to discuss.

Individual Differences

Gilmore: At present, I believe the University of Oregon does not adequately account for individual differences. This is partly the fault of the curriculum, partly because of poor advising. When I talk of curriculum I'll have to confine myself to the College of Liberal Arts. I am only familiar there. The curriculum stands, it is not well-suited only to the "average" student. The below average student lacks assistance, and the superior student lacks enough opportunity for developing his ability in learning.

Both extremes suffer from

(Please turn to page 2)

5 SUBJECTS CONSIDERED BY STUDENTS IN SYMPOSIUM

We chose five students and a chairman, all of them thinkers and shrewd observers of conditions surrounding them.

We gave them five subjects, all of them vital threads in the web of education at the University of Oregon.

The students talked and researched on their subjects for several weeks. Then they sat down with a tape-recorder, each gave a short speech, and questions and answers followed. A condensation of the first hour of discussion is printed on this page.

This is no scientific sampling of opinion on the

Oregon campus. These are no great new theories in the field of education.

This is an attempt to awaken and vitalize the slumber scene of lecture and listen. It's a small stride toward changing that label of "serving time" to "learning."

We students are interested in classes, grades, advisers, teaching techniques. Some of us are about to sign out of the University of Oregon, but we still want to make it a better Oregon for the thousands who will follow us.

To that end—a better education at the University of Oregon—this page is printed.—The Editor.