

Retyped 7/15/64

Why the Comprehensive College Tests?

Interim Council

November 6, 1963

I hope tonight's agenda, with ETS staff scheduled for most of the talking, doesn't lull you into a false sense of after dinner ease. The distribution of labor tonight is really a little more like the case that was being pleaded in court recently. The client's case was looking pretty dismal as the eloquent lawyer for the opposition pleaded his case with the help of occasional notes passed to him by his partner. After watching this partnership, the client leaned over to his lawyer and said that he felt that they needed two lawyers. His lawyer tried to explain that the only really important thing was that each side be represented. The client still looked distressed and said, "But when one of their lawyers is talking the other one is thinking and when you're talking, no one is thinking."

We just want to be sure that someone is thinking tonight while we're talking.

I thought I might begin tonight by tracing the development of this program in the context of some of the changes taking place in higher education—changes which seem to focus on the need for a national testing program at the college sophomore level.

The first of these general movements in education could be probably classified under the simple all-inclusive heading of "More Education for More People." Under this heading, I would include such phenomena as the rapid rise of the junior colleges, the increased emphasis upon graduate studies, the greater diversity in background and ability of today's college student bodies, and the necessarily greater selectivity on the part of the pressured colleges.

To take these one at a time. Once given the junior college movement, the four-year colleges are finding that they will be called upon for guidance of the transfer student in terms of curriculum and many will have to make decisions regarding acceptance into the upper-division—not only from the junior college transfers but also from students in the first two years of the four-year colleges.

In some states, the growth of junior college enrollment is especially rapid, and the change in higher education within the state is dramatic.

Junior college transfers in California, for example, comprise seventy percent of all transfer students, and in some California state colleges, nearly sixty percent of all entering students are transfers. The University of Michigan had a thirty percent increase in the number of junior college transfers in the single year from 1960-61. In Florida in 1960 the existing fourteen public junior colleges already contained forty-three percent of all college freshmen in that state.

I'm sure that President Allen could give a better picture of the Florida situation than I can, but the state is taking a hard look at what they are going to do about the fact that the receiving institutions in Florida are not going to be able to accommodate all who are seeking admissions as juniors. They estimate that one-third of the students who enter colleges as freshmen, will transfer to the upper-division of a different college.

In order to plan for this influx of students, the Florida Commission on Admissions for the State Universities has recommended that all students entering upper-division work from junior colleges or from four-year institutions be required to present test scores as one criterion for admission. Like any other innovation in education, however, this program would cost money and the budget commission has not recommended the funds for the testing of 16,000 students, but there is interest in it and it is my understanding that an appeal will be made for the funds to support the program.

At the same time we have this pressure from the two-year students, we are witnessing a great scramble for graduate studies. Jim Perkins, in his inaugural address at Cornell last month, pointed out that there are probably two alternatives for the preparation of graduate students. One is to create a closer intergration between the last two years of undergraduate studies and the graduate years, and the other alternative is to make a greater difference between graduate and undergraduate studies. Cornell and many other colleges seem at present to be going in the direction of the first alternative, which is tending to make a greater distinction between the first two years and the last two years of college.

For example, at Cornell now a student in the College of Arts and Sciences must be accepted into the upper-division--even though he has passed his first two years at Cornell with satisfactory grades.

In other words, we are seeing what is frequently referred to as the 2 + 2 as the junior college movement on the one hand, and the expansion of graduate studies on the other, appear to be joining hands to force a reappraisal of the college sophomore as he enters the upper-division work.

The second area of concern of the colleges which seems to call for test measures focuses around the entire credit structure.

The sacredness of the credit hour of classroom instruction as a measure of education is somewhat peculiar to American colleges, but there seems to be an increasing awareness of the shakiness of the assumption that educational achievement is necessarily measured in a course packaged in quarter or semester hours with the content padded or trimmed down to fit neatly in the credit unit prescribed. This is of special significance when the professor is now offering his credit hour to students with highly diverse backgrounds and in institutions varying widely in standards for both admissions and graduation. While we imply that a college degree with its prescribed number of credit hours represents a given level of educational achievement, it is a fact that some college graduates would not be admitted as freshmen to other institutions.

And there are other changes that are forcing greater flexibility in the traditional way of thinking about college education. The vast opportunities in the use of new media for independent studies and the growing popularity and respectability of adult education programs raise new questions about where the student should begin.

As in the first example, where the junior college and the graduate school movement seemed to join together to force a reappraisal of the sophomore student, we again find several factors converging which seem to demand a greater flexibility in educational evaluation--and the colleges seem to be seeking a solution to the question.

From 1955 to 1960, there was a substantial increase in the number of colleges granting credit-by-examination through the Advanced Placement Program. In 1955, twenty-seven institutions awarded credit on the basis of the Advanced Placement Program, whereas by 1959, 133 colleges were awarding credit. The increase is on the order of 493%.

The growth of adult educational opportunities--whether for credit or not--has been equally dramatic in recent years.

It is estimated that over fifty million people are now taking advantage of educational opportunities outside the traditional college curriculum.

The Stanford University Institute for Communications Research estimates "that by 1970 as much as fifty percent of all college degree programs will be available via educational TV." If this prediction is true, it will certainly put a new face on credit structure and on the traditional college curriculum. Let me give two brief examples of educational organizations interested in encouraging independent study.

The Committee on Institutional Cooperation of the Council of Ten and the University of Chicago, have proposed the establishment of a national organization to serve colleges and universities concerned with the encouragement of recognition of independent studies at the college level. This organization would provide a clearinghouse for the development and use of examinations to measure and credit student achievement at the college level.

New York state is perhaps the best example of a large-scale organized and operating attempt to break out of the rigidity of the credit system. The New York State Education Department has established a college proficiency examination program in which they will list the colleges which have agreed in principle to the idea of granting credit for satisfactory performance on their course examinations. The student doing independent study by the use of records, TV, correspondence, or any other means of preparation, may then apply to the college for credit. Ninety-five two- and four-year institutions in New York have agreed to be listed as open to this possibility for credit-by-examination.

The Comprehensive College Testing Program has had as a major purpose the evaluation of those who, through choice or circumstances, are pursuing education by non-traditional means. Although the American people generally seem to be seeking educational opportunities, there are two large groups with special needs for education which does not follow the traditional college pattern.

Both servicemen--whose mobility prevents residential study--and the women of the country--whose life pattern presents continuity problems in education--have shown special interest in independent study--and it should be added that these groups in particular are interested in obtaining college credit--the women for reentry into the labor market after the children are in school--and the servicemen for greater promotional opportunities.

The serviceman's interest has been represented since 1945 by the ACE Commission on the Accreditation of Service Experiences, working closely with the United States Armed Forces Institute and the Defense Advisory Commission on Education. But these groups have felt a need for some time now for examinations to replace the old General Educational Development college-level examinations.

As for the women, many colleges throughout the country have become interested in finding ways for talented women to refresh and continue their education at the appropriate time—but there are needs here for tests to evaluate the individual's level of educational achievement as she returns to school.

The last development in college education that I am just going to mention as a group are all those who have interest in some kind of experimental educational programs. While experimentation with curricula and instructional methods has always gone on at the better institutions, innovations have perhaps been on the increase recently because of the new developments which I have mentioned, plus others—all of which are making new demands on education.

Among junior colleges, the most commonly favored objective is "general education" with any of its numerous definitions. These schools are going to be interested in how well their programs are meeting this goal. Four-year institutions, too, are moving in this direction.

In summary then, the kinds of needs that were being expressed concerned:

- (1) The evaluation of the status of those pursuing atypical patterns of education.
- (2) The establishment of standards for accreditation of a great variety of forms of independent study.
- (3) The provisions of instruments helpful in the guidance and selection of students for upper-division study.
- (4) The assistance to institutions in evaluating their educational programs and the intellectual growth of their students.

As these needs began to come to the forefront, ETS sponsored a conference with the support of the Carnegie Foundation at which a group of educational leaders concluded that expanding the use of tests in higher education, particularly to measure the outcome of liberal education, was both desirable and feasible and the Comprehensive College Testing Program is the result so far.