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Student Personnel Services: Implications for Administrators

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American education have assumed that student personnel services are both necessary and valuable, we have struggled only superficially with the philosophical and practical questions involved in these assumptions. It is my personal conviction that student personnel services are falling far short of making the contribution to education that they could and should be making. The fault, I think, lies both inside and outside of the profession; the solution may lie in the analysis of what is and some consideration of what could be.

I'd like to start this morning with a description of the present state of the art.

The best overall source of descriptive information about student personnel services is the 1966 U. S. Office of Education survey of 723 colleges. The investigators received a 95 percent return of a questionnaire mailed to a 50 percent sample of all of the universities, liberal arts colleges, teachers colleges and junior colleges of the nation. The purpose of the study was to gather information about "the organization of student services to provide those responsible for the administration of the institutions of higher education, and others responsible for planning, with guidelines for evaluation and modification." (1, p. xiii)

The study reports that there are 20 administrative functions most prevalent in the student services offered in American colleges. These can be broadly considered under four headings:

1. Welfare functions—such as counseling, testing, health services, financial aids, and placement.
2. Control functions—admissions, records, discipline, housing.
3. Activities functions—such as student government, student publications, student unions, and social events.
4. Teaching functions—such as orientation programs, foreign student programs, remedial clinics, etc.

The data from the college indicate widespread offering of student services, with nine of the 20 functions being offered by 90 percent of the total group of colleges. Specifically, those nine student services which are offered in almost all colleges are: (1) Admissions, (2) Academic Records, (3) Counseling, (4) Financial Aids, (5) Testing, (6) Extracurricular Activities, (7) Non-academic Records, (8) Recruitment, (9) Food Services.

The extent of such services vary, of course, depending on the type of institution; 100 percent of the universities offer medical services, for example, whereas only 30 percent of the junior colleges do; 90 percent of the liberal arts colleges have residence halls whereas 55 percent of the junior colleges offer such facilities.

While surveys such as this demonstrate beyond question that virtually every American college offers student services, the picture becomes very fuzzy when we attempt to assess the facts about the organization and administration of such services.

Most colleges (86 percent) have some person who is classifiable as the chief student services officer. He may, however, be directly responsible for some functions, share the responsibility for others, and have virtually nothing to say about still other functions which concern services to students. The U. S. Office report shows clearly that colleges have not yet decided what to do about the organization of student personnel services. Although 86 percent of the institutions have a chief personnel officer, a relatively low percentage of specialized student services officers report directly to a person who carries overall responsibility for the total program.

The Dean of Women is more likely than any other personnel officer to report directly to the chief officer of student services. On half of the campuses, she is administratively responsible to a Dean of Students, Vice President for Student Affairs, or similar official. Although the work of the Dean of Men and Director of Counseling are considered student services on 85-95 percent of the campuses, only 25 percent of the Deans of Men and 25 percent of the Directors of Counseling report to a chief student services officer. For financial aides, placement, and housing, the figure is 20 percent. On only 10 percent of the campuses does the Director of Admissions or the director of a remedial clinic report to a chief personnel administrator.

Unless we wish to make, what seems to me, the unwarranted assumption that the President of the college or university is coordinating the student personnel services, I think we must assume that there is little attempt to make student personnel services into a coordinated student personnel program. What we now have is what has been termed curb-service administration of student personnel functions.

As far as the student is concerned, he is admitted by the admissions office, receives his scholarship from the office of financial aid and his dormitory assignment from the housing office. He is oriented to college life by the Dean's Office, is treated for a sore throat by the health services and for slow reading speed by the reading clinic. He registers for fraternity rushing at the Dean of Men's Office and for the chess club at the student union. If he has a personal problem, he has his choice of a psychiatric counselor, a religious counselor, an academic advisor, a marriage counselor, a career counselor or specialist for almost any other kind of problem he is able to label.

As long as the student gets the services he wants, and the faculty are relieved of burdensome details, and things are running smoothly for the President and Board of Trustees, no one worries about making curb service student services into a coordinated program. As a matter of fact, despite the large amount of educational budget allotted to student services, most of us assume that the function of all of these services is to keep extraneous factors from interfering with academic study. But I submit that the effective coordination of student services can make a positive contribution to the educational mission of the college.

For example, let us assume that college X has agreed that one of the educational purposes of the institution is to expose students to differing viewpoints and to broaden their acquaintance with persons whose ideas, backgrounds, and interests differ from their own. One of the goals then might be to attract and provide for a diversity of student backgrounds. It is a cooperative task of faculty, administration, and trustees to define the goals of the institution, but it is the job of the specialists to bring their specialized knowledge to bear on reaching these goals.

In this example, the admissions office may need to broaden its base of applicants; the financial aids office may need to reallocate assignments of money, campus jobs, and loans; the dormitory staff may need to work with students, and frequently with parents, on the acceptance of all students into the residence life; the placement office may need to attract new potential employers or change some of the concepts of old ones; the deans' offices may need to revise orientation programs.

It may be that it is on our definition of educational goals and purposes that we stumble, and that all the coordination in the world won't define institutional objectives where there are none. On the other hand, the opportunity for the effective implementation of certain institutional objectives is surely being lost when only 1/4 of the Deans of Men and 1/5 of the housing officers have a common channel for communication and coordination.

With the fairly recent advent of Deans of Students and Vice Presidents for Student Services, student personnel administration is gaining the opportunity for positive educational contribution.

Coordination of student services is one thing; integration into the total educational program is quite another. Many academic specialists regard the student personnel administrators as non-academic and those who do not regard them as disciplinarians hired by a paternalistic administration to stifle student freedom and initiative feel that, at best, the function of student services is to handle the administrative necessities so that health, finances, personal problems, etc. will not interfere with academic pursuits. Frequently the Dean of Students and even more frequently all of his staff are excluded from any group which discusses or determines educational policy. In many colleges, the personnel administrators may attend the all-college faculty meetings only if they are also members of the teaching faculty—and the larger their job, the less likely they are to have time to teach. Often the personnel deans are the only deans excluded from the faculty senate or similar educational policy-making body. It is no wonder that this kind of isolation from the total educational enterprise frequently results in an extra-curricular program which is out of step, and often in competition, with the academic program.

Again, let me give an example: Generally speaking the orientation of the student to the college is the responsibility of the student personnel division—from catalogue descriptions to admissions interviews to the formal campus orientation program. Be it ever so fleeting an exposure, I suspect that college purposes as revealed in the college catalogue might result in different impressions and expectations on the part of the new student.

Consider these examples of the general purposes of the liberal arts colleges of two universities, as described in last year's catalogues:

"The College of Arts and Sciences is concerned with introducing its young men to the fields of knowledge which may lead to the understanding of the most fundamentally important problems of man's life in his universal environments. Our educational program is therefore aimed at giving the individual the best possible opportunity, under guidance, to satisfy basic intellectual curiosities and at the same time to round out an understanding and appreciation of the physical, social, and intellectual world in which he lives."

Contrast the students orientation to those purposes with this description of the liberal arts college of a large state university.

"Enrolled in the college are those students who have not definitely made up their minds about the field upon which they wish to concentrate, those who are gaining preliminary liberal arts foundations for later specialization in one of the professional schools of the University, and those who are majoring or preparing to major in one or more of the liberal arts and sciences."

These two statements reflect quite different purposes for liberal arts education. They may reflect genuine differences in institutional objectives, but they may also reflect the differing perspectives of the particular administrator who wrote that section of the bulletin.

The college catalogue is one opportunity to define educational purpose. Another—frequently lost—opportunity is the college orientation of new students. Orientation programs differ remarkably, and many simply reflect the orientation of the particular student personnel administrator who happens to be responsible for orientation. On some campuses, orientation week consists largely of picnics, mixers, pep rallies, sorority and fraternity rushing, and a series of placement tests. On others, students begin their college year by participating in discussions of readings which have been assigned over the summer, by listening to lectures by outstanding faculty members, and by visits to faculty homes.

I suspect that on many campuses the president, the chief academic officers and certainly most faculty members haven't the slightest idea of what is presented to the student in his introduction to the campus. And, on the other side of the coin, the student personnel administrator has frequently given little or no thought to any unity of educational purpose for the institution.

Unlike the problem of coordination of student services, which at least is making a start toward a solution; the problem of integration is, I think, either at a standstill or getting worse. This is particularly true of institutions which are growing in size. Until the personnel administrators are exposed to and participate in the major discussions of the students' education, I'm afraid we won't have the kind of

college environment which makes clear that the educational goals of the institution are something more than efficient curb-service administration to students.

It may lend some perspective to the present problems of student services fragmentation and isolation to look at some historical antecedents. Historically the first college staff members to perform the special duties of student personnel work were those who were diverted from other tasks to act in loco parentis—in the place of the parent—for students who were isolated in their dormitories from the evil influences of nearby towns. So all-pervasive was the concept of the in loco parentis responsibilities of colleges, that it affected major decisions concerning educational policy. Listen to this letter to the regents of the University of Michigan in 1858 from Horace Mann, President of Antioch College, which from its founding had admitted women.

"The advantages of a joint education are great. The dangers of it are terrible These dangers consist in (students') opportunities for association together without supervision . . . if, for instance, they must be permitted in a city like yours to board promiscuously among the inhabitants. I should prefer that the young women of that age should lose the advantages of an education, rather than incur the moral danger of obtaining it in that way Strongly, therefore, as I am in favor of the joint education of the sexes I should first demand of the faculty complete moral protection Can you make yourself sure against clandestine meetings? . . . You may think these are collateral matters. I think they are vital to the question." (2)

Obviously, in Horace Mann's day the "moral protection" of the student was the responsibility of the faculty, but faculty members were soon to rebel against such assignments. Mrs. Leonard points out in her book, Origins of Personnel Services, that ". . . faculty members were required to eat with the students and maintain order in the dining room halls but this was found so unnerving that it was one of the first of the personnel services to be given over to other officers." (4, p. 109)

Soon Deans of Women were hired and one of them related in 1908 the reason for the appointments of these early personnel officers.

"The problem of excess has, indeed, official recognition. Presidents and faculties wag their heads, appoint committees, make investigations, send out questionnaires. When things get to a certain point—usually when something happens to remind people of the Garden of Eden—the university appoints a Dean of Women, whose powers and duties seem to consist in persuading the unpersuadable and in making water run up hill. Various systems of cooperative or student self-government succeed more or less badly for periods more or less brief." (2)

These quotations from history serve to make the point that Student Personnel Services have been basically problem-oriented. A problem exists; someone is hired to take care of it. Thomas Arkle Clark summed it up when he said of his

appointment in 1901 as Dean of Men of the University of Illinois. "I relieved the President of some very unpleasant duties." (8, p. 6)

The problem-centered approach to Student Personnel Administration did not end in 1901. Today the Federal government makes available college scholarships, and a financial aids officer is hired to administer them; industry sends recruiters to the campus, and a placement office is created. I see nothing wrong with hiring a specialist to do a job which clearly exists. But, historically, the problem for student personnel workers, I think, has been that personnel work has been cast into a caretaker role rather than a role of program leadership.

Thus the historical background of student personnel administration has contributed to the present lack of coordination, and it also accounts to some extent for the isolation from the more basic educational concerns of the institution.

There is a second factor which has held back the educational contribution of Student Personnel Administrators. Although it too has its roots in the historical problem, it is sufficiently distinct to warrant separate attention. That is the matter of the professional status of student personnel administration.

This is a matter of considerable concern to personnel administrators themselves. Who are the personnel administrators? What is the nature of their duties, and how well prepared are they for their tasks?

Again quoting from the 1966 U. S. Office of Education survey, on three-fourths of the campuses, the chief personnel officer carries the title of Dean of Students, Vice President for Student Services, Director of Student Personnel Services or some similar title that indicates the area of concern. About 45 percent of these top administrators do some teaching although the number teaching is noticeably less for large institutions, and deans in public institutions are more likely to be full-time administrators than are those in private colleges.

While the master's is the typical degree held by personnel heads over all institutions, almost half of those in four-year institutions have an earned doctorate. At the other extreme are the two-year colleges where the formula is about 15 percent doctorate, 77 percent masters, and eight percent bachelors. About half of the student personnel directors have their preparation in the professional field of education, but the humanities and social sciences are also well represented. Generally speaking the chief student personnel officer is relatively new to his job. Thirty-two percent of the sample of 621, had been in their present position of leadership less than two years; over half had held their job for less than five years. For the most part, the Deans of Students or Vice Presidents for Student Services are young men, coming to their present jobs via promotion from within their institutions. The great majority are under 50 years of age and with the exception of the very small colleges, there are almost no women in the top student personnel slot on the campus. Although it seems to me there is a superfluous number of professional student personnel organizations, almost one-quarter of the directors of personnel services belong to no professional organizations.

These, then are the heads of student services who, taken as a group, assume the leadership and presumably the professional direction of the field of college personnel work. What do they say it is?

For some time now student personnel workers have been engaging in that popular personal and professional sport of "seeking identity."

What—if anything—is it that the dean of women, the director of financial aids, the director of placement, and the student union director have in common? Is there a body of specialized knowledge which these individuals must obtain through training in order to perform their jobs? This matter of professional identity has been hotly debated in the professional journals for years. Although those of us who continue our exposure to the debate, tend to solidify our positions, the matter is by no means settled, and it has both philosophical and practical import for those who must select and work with a leader-coordinator for the vast network of student personnel services. Historically, the first personnel workers were faculty, then they came from the faculty—and now the debate is whether they ought, by virtue of training and education, to be a unique educational officer with a distinctive academic preparation.

It is not difficult to see that today's financial aids officer needs highly specialized information. A recent ETS study showed that colleges administered over 250 million dollars in scholarships, loans, and jobs in 1963-64. To read and interpret a single document such as the Parents' Confidential Statement is hardly a task for the uninitiated. Likewise, it is hard to conceive of a foreign student advisor who doesn't know his way through visas and embassy regulations. But a profession is not made of facts and procedures that change from entrance to exit from graduate school. And the question boils down to, Is there a common core for the training of student personnel administrators which will give more coherence to a program of personnel services? Only about one-quarter of the top personnel administrators at the present time have graduate training in guidance or student personnel administration. But it is likewise true, that for the most part, we have no program of services; we have a number of discrete and separate personnel offices. Is there a glue that can bind these services into a cohesive whole?

During the 1940's counseling was considered the basic body of knowledge which held the profession together. It was during this period that we found ourselves with admissions counselors, financial aids counselors, residence hall counselors, placement counselors, health counselors, and even orientation counselors and sorority rushing counselors. We had Deans of Women who became Counselors to Women on the grounds that it reduced their authoritarian image. Although it is certainly true that all of these jobs involve working director with students, frequently in face-to-face encounters, it is probably not very realistic to think that most of these contacts are counseling relationships—at least not in the professional sense of the word. Nevertheless, there are many who believe that counseling is the badge to professionalism for the personnel worker. Although I have seen no figures on the matter, I would guess that most graduate departments of student personnel administration are in divisions of counseling guidance.

In the mid-1950's, Esther Lloyd Jones of Columbia Teachers' College attacked the counselor concept of student personnel administration as too narrowing. She proposed instead the concept of "Student Personnel Work as Deeper Teaching," which focused upon the wholeness of the student and the student personnel worker's unique concern with the development of all of the abilities. This viewpoint plus the continuing attempts of college faculties to divorce themselves from the old parental responsibilities by claiming concern only with the student's mind, led to the exaggerated claims of some personnel workers that the distinctive characteristic of student personnel work is its concern with the well-being of the whole student.

Although many of us hope that colleges will not lose sight of the wholeness of the student, I doubt that such concern is unique to student personnel workers nor does it seem a very adequate basis for building a profession.

If one is to expect more of personnel administrators than technique, program maintenance, and ever-increasing office efficiency, then I think we must attract bright, imaginative, dedicated people to a program of professional preparation which will enable them to practice a skilled profession and to expand the knowledge through research. The explosion of research knowledge about student characteristics, campus environments, and the overall impact of the college experience upon the student is no longer something that "an English teacher who enjoys students" can pick up and then go forth to lead in a constructive program of student personnel services.

Most graduate programs are not yet prepared to offer what I would consider professional training for student personnel administrators. The majority of Deans of Students and Vice Presidents for Student Services are not now professionally trained to offer the leadership that is needed, but a great deal of progress is being made in training and in selection for positions of leadership and I have hopes that student personnel administration is coming of age as a profession.

Before I leave this somewhat over-simplified analysis of some of the problems of student personnel services as they exist today, I'd like to comment briefly on the problems of student personnel services as they are seen in the popular press. A glance at the newsstands is enough to convince even the most idealistic among us that U. S. News and World Report can sell as many copies as True Story if only they announce on the cover that they have news coverage on Drugs on the College Campus or the most recent survey of the Sex Practices of the College Coed. And what's better for prolonged national interest than the Berkeley demonstrations? Unfortunate though it may be, as far as the public is concerned, the matters that fall under the aegis of the Dean of Students' office have considerably more human interest value than any other aspect of American higher education.

It is also a matter of research evidence that student services can get the students as excited as any other phase of their education. Dr. Richard Peterson of Educational Testing Service has just recently completed a study of organized student protests in 1964-65. He asked 1,000 Deans of Students of accredited four-year colleges and universities what issues on their campus during 1964-65 had occasioned "organized student protest," which he defined as planned public expressions of

disapproval on the part of groups of students. He received an 85 percent return of the questionnaire which indicates a pretty good representation of student protests during 1964-65. You might guess that there have been more student demonstrations over the civil rights issue than any other, and this is correct. Approximately 38 percent of the 850 colleges reported some type of civil rights protest over practices in the local community.

But ranking second in a field of 27 causes for protest were protests regarding food services! And the third most common reason for protest was living group regulations (women's hours, etc.) which were protested on 28 percent of the campuses. The other leading causes of organized student protest were U. S. policies in Vietnam, dress regulations on campus, and insufficient student participation in establishing campus policies.

Thus four of the leading student protest issues fall directly in the area of student personnel services—food service, dormitory regulations, dress regulations, and student participation in campus policies. It is perhaps a little ironic that American colleges have gone to all this effort to provide student services and now it appears that the student is literally biting the hand that feeds him. It is all well and good to talk about a positive coordinated and purposeful program of student personnel services, but the college administrator is also vitally concerned with these more negative issues. There was a song some years ago that went "accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative" and this may be a good theme for dealing with student services on the campus.

However immune one may wish to remain from an over-emphasis on the "public image" of the institution at the expense of "education" the fact remains that the public, the students, and even the faculty frequently derive their concept of institutional policy from the policies of student services offices.

Should the registrar report grades to the draft board? Should the health services dispense the pill? Can student organizations invite whomever they wish to speak on the campus? These are issues of interest, and however they are settled, they are likely to speak for the institution. There is a better chance, however, of representing the educational purposes of the institution if student personnel services are an integrated program within the educational community.

I referred a few minutes ago to "accentuating the positive" and, I'd like to spend the remaining time discussing some research findings that have significance for the positive role which a program of student personnel services can play.

We are now accumulating research evidence to indicate that the impact of the educational experience on the student is rather directly affected by the total campus "climate" or environment. To the extent that students perceive a unity of educational purpose in the total program, we might expect college experiences to "make a difference." Philip Jacob, in his study of "Changing Values in College," refers to this phenomenon by entitling one of his chapters, "The Peculiar Potency of Some Colleges," and he notes that,

"... the intellectual, cultural or moral 'climate' of some institutions stands out from the crowd. The response of students to education within the atmosphere of these institutions is strikingly different from the national pattern. The very individuality of these places makes comparisons unreal, but they do seem to have in common a high level of expectancy of their students. What is expected is not the same It may be outstanding intellectual initiative and drive, profound respect for the dignity and worth of works, world-mindedness or just open-mindedness, a sense of community responsibility or of social justice, a dedication to humanitarian service, or religious faithfulness. Everyone, however, is conscious of the mission to which the institution stands dedicated, though this is not necessarily loudly trumpeted at every convocation, nor elaborated in fulsome paragraphs of aims and purposes in the college bulletin.

"Where there is such unity and vigor of expectation, students seem drawn to live up to the college standard, even if it means quite a wrench from their previous ways of thought," (3, p. 4)

As you probably know, the measurement of this rather elusive quality known as the "college environment" has been the subject of much recent study. In the late 1950's, Pace and Stern developed an instrument known as the College Characteristics Index; Pace is presently concerned with further experimentation on the C. U. E. S. Astin has developed a somewhat different approach with the Environmental Assessment Technique. Certainly we do know that colleges show measurable differences in environment on these research measures.

Pace and Baird have recently completed some studies of the effect of environmental factors upon student attainment. They concluded that "the greatest impact is from the largest mass." In other words the total environment of the college has more impact on some important educational goals than have the more homogeneous curricular sub-groupings such as major field of study. Furthermore, generally speaking the smaller the sub-grouping they used, (biology for example vs. sciences) the less impact it has on student attainment, which they defined in terms of 1) students feelings of progress toward educational goals, 2) students satisfactions with college life, and 3) college grades.

Not only did the total college environment seem to bear the greatest relationship to students feelings of educational attainment and grades, but when various academic-field sub-groups were compared, it was found that the impact of the subculture depended more upon the college in which it was located than it did upon its presumed similarity to academic majors on other campuses.

The point is simply this: where a student studies may be considerably more important than what he studies. There is a considerable body of research coming into existence which indicates that those institutions operating from a consistent and pervasive educational philosophy have a peculiar and lasting effect upon the lives of students. Student personnel services are concerned with the out-of-class experiences of students; they cut across all fields of study, and one might hypothesize that the

clarity of their goals and the unity of their purpose would assist in defining the environment of the institution.

In summary, it seems to me we can conclude that:

1. Student personnel services are a universally accepted part of American higher education.
2. Little attention has been given to the integration of these services into the total educational program. For the most part, they lack coordination among themselves, and they are frequently isolated from the larger concerns of the academic community.
3. There is research evidence that clarity of educational purpose has an important impact upon the growth of the student, and there is every reason to think that institutional purposes can be reflected in the administration of student personnel services.

These facts, it seems to me, have implications for academic administrators. Depending in large measure upon the college leadership, student personnel offices can contribute positively to education; they can simply administer their services efficiently and leave the educational program relatively unaffected; or they can quite actively interfere with the goals of the academic community.

To the extent that they are considered full partners in the educational enterprise, to that extent have they potential for real contribution to the education of the student.

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