

Uniting Forces to Improve Education

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University-Community Cooperation in New York State

IN ACCEPTING the presidency of the New York State Citizens' Council this June, Dean Ernest O. Melby of New York University called for a new kind of education. "It isn't," he said, "more education we need (the Germany that tolerated Hitler was remarkably well educated) but a different *kind* of education . . . Our schools can do what so desperately needs doing if they use the teeming laboratory surrounding each one—the community . . . Some day we are going to discover how to vitalize the community and at the same time give meaning to the whole process of education."

It is to help colleges and communities together develop this kind of education that the University-Community Cooperation Project (UCCP) has been launched in New York State. Itself a story of cooperation, the project is being carried out by the New York State Citizens' Council with the Association of Colleges and Universities of New York and the State University.

As an outgrowth of the Ninth Annual Institute of Community Leadership held by the Citizens' Council in June 1953 at Hobart College, Geneva, a thirty-member Advisory Committee to the UCCP undertook an initial study of college-community relations in New York State.

Twenty-six of the fifty-seven colleges and universities involved were selected

for initial study. The "team" approach, involving faculty, administration, students and community representatives spearheaded this initial effort. In October host teams first accumulated preliminary data and then worked with visiting teams for an afternoon, evening and the following day gathering additional data. The study director, working with the Advisory Committee, wrote the report based on these data.

Although these initial efforts, because of the time factor, did not provide adequate safeguards against too much subjectivity and a lack of quantitative data, there were revealed certain strengths of the study as found in the face-to-face discussions on campus and in community, the diversity of points of view and experience involved, and the increased probability of follow-up as a result of wide participation. Key groups on campuses and in communities across the state took a thoughtful look at college-community relations. Several of the twenty-six institutions have gone on to evaluate their own report and in some cases to do a deeper self-study. In addition to the twenty-six schools involved, twenty-four other institutions sent representatives to the Tenth Annual Institute of Community Leadership at Hobart College in June of this year to learn what the study had revealed and to consider its implications for them.

In determining the initial study ob-

jective, the Advisory Committee was concerned primarily in finding out to what extent various needs were recognized. The Advisory Committee regarded the study as a foundation effort for future planning and action. It assumed that there is a need for closer college - community cooperation and that this could be achieved. It recognized that college-community cooperation is not a new idea. Traditionally there have long been mutually rewarding relations between college and community. The very history of the New York State Citizens' Council reflects this tradition through the leadership given by the president and faculties of such institutions as Union College, Cornell University, Syracuse University, Colgate University, Columbia College, Hobart College, and New York University, as well as by the scores of other university men and women who have worked for, with and through the Council.

Strengthening Individual Responsibilities

Our primary concern has been the ways in which college and community relations can help strengthen individual responsibility. The approach here was to search for a "plus element—the emerging practices which are relatively unique and may be experimental as contrasted with common and well tested practices, emerging practices concerned with dynamic problems of living in a modern community" and generally involving students and/or college personnel participating actively and creatively with citizens of the community.

More than three hundred such practices were reported by the twenty-six

teams. These reflected use of community resources in teaching, use of the community as a laboratory, and development by college and community of mutually beneficial enterprises. It was revealed that through cooperative relationships between colleges and their communities students are getting a sound educational experience and are developing skills and insights and habits of responsibility that promise well for future citizenship. Teachers are teaching in a more vital way, and communities are increasingly identifying the college as a source of help in community betterment. The college itself is in a stronger position to solve the problems, financial and otherwise, that confront it. The study concluded that these goals are most likely to be realized where there is a declared policy which views the college as having a community responsibility.

At the end of the first year of the UCCP the Advisory Committee has detected a number of evidences of positive growth toward the stated purposes of the project:

1. An apparent trend toward more college-community cooperation.
2. A recognition that the integrity of both college and community must be maintained. (There is little question that if the college is to be of maximum service to the community it must carry out increasingly well its primary instructional responsibility. At the same time, if the community is to be used as a laboratory a primary concern must be what happens to the community in the process.)
3. A strengthening of the belief that "education for what" can be answered positively. (Not only to man and con-

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trol our technology but also to man and maintain our free institutions we need people educated in the sense Dean Melby referred to above.)

4. A realization that further financial support of higher education must be achieved. (A demonstration of the will to serve and to work together, of improved communications, and of a sound community relations policy should either provide direct financial help or greatly strengthen the hand of the college in seeking funds.)

The next activities in the work of the UCCP are now being developed. Meeting at the June Institute, the Advisory Committee outlined next steps and clarified policy and objectives. The Committee defined the goal as the deepening and enriching of the interaction of community and college. It stated that the first step towards realiz-

ing this goal is an increased recognition by the college of its responsibilities to the community. In view of the diversity of purpose and structure among colleges in a pluralistic society, the ways of discharging these responsibilities must be varied. As the first task of the UCCP was an initial study of some of the ways in which certain colleges have attempted to discharge these responsibilities, the second task should be assisting in the further and broader study of university-community cooperation.

An additional, and perhaps the most important task, is the use of the accumulated knowledge and experience in the development of concrete activities designed to realize the basic goal.

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