

Meeting Problems of Expanding Student Enrollments

Our rapidly increasing population of college-age youth is a tremendous national asset. Certain trends are indicated in providing adequately for higher education for these young people in the future.

THE Nation's most important potential resource is its young people. If its colleges and universities are to do their jobs effectively, they must plan their instructional programs in terms of the educational needs of the young people served. Planning of this character requires considerable knowledge of educational backgrounds of the state or the constituency served, population trends and educational needs. This brief article is concerned, therefore, with certain basic population and educational facts and trends and their implications.

College-Age Population and Enrollments

American higher education has greatly expanded since the turn of the century and there are many indications that this process will continue. The important question, therefore, is how fast and how far will expansion continue? In 1900, when the United States had a total population of approximately 76 million, its total college enrollment was 237,592. In 1955, when the Bureau of the Census estimated a total population of approximately 165 millions, the Office of Education *Fall Enrollment Survey* reported a college and university enrollment fig-

ure of 2,720,000. The Office's recent estimate of enrollments for the new school year indicated that the higher institutions would enroll about 236,000 more students this academic year than in 1955-56 and that the total enrollment would be approximately 3,230,000.¹

The current ratio of college enrollments to the college-age population group (18-21 years) is approximately 40 per cent, which is slightly more than double the comparable figure before World War II. The nature of the change since 1900 and its possible higher levels is indicated by the following quotation from the 1954 report² of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers:

The percentage of college-age youth attending institutions of higher education has increased from an average of approximately 1 per cent a year for the last twenty years, rising from 4 per cent in 1900 to more than 30 per cent at the present time. It seems obvious that we have not reached the peak at 30 per cent. Undoubtedly, we shall not reach for many years the 80 per cent attendance in higher education which we

¹ Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. "1½ Million, Enrollment Increase of 1956-57." *School Life* 39:6-7 (October 1956).

² Ronald B. Thompson. *The Impending Tidal Wave of Students*, p. 20.

have reached at the secondary school level. We may, however, reach 40 or 50 per cent of the age group in attendance in our institutions of higher education.

Many estimates, particularly for certain states, suggest that even larger percentages of young people of college age will enroll in the colleges and universities. Upon the basis of the increase of the college-age population alone, the enrollment increase during the coming decade will approximate 70 per cent. Fairly conservative estimates, depending upon the assumptions upon which they are based, indicate that the nation's total college enrollment during the next 15 years will increase somewhere between 50 and 150 per cent.

That enrollment ratios and increases of selected states will by no means be uniform is suggested by the figures from the 1950 Census and recent state surveys of higher education. In the first column are the percentages of the college-age group enrolled in college and in the other column are the estimated enrollment percentage increases by 1965.

	Percentage of college-age group enrolled in college 1950	Estimated percentage increase in college enrollment 1965 over 1955
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Arizona	29	24
California	39	120
Florida	23	125
Louisiana	21	68
Maryland	26	65
Michigan	29	23
Mississippi	15	50
Ohio	29	65
West Virginia	19	39

Supply of Potentially Able Students

However, in spite of the "impending tidal wave," there are still a substantial number of superior high school graduates who are not yet attending college. Hollinshead, in his recent volume, *Who*

Should Go To College, estimated that there were approximately 100,000 young people each year from the highest fourth of ability who drop out of high school before graduation. He also estimated that there was an additional group of 203,000 equally superior high school graduates who failed to enter college. Presumably, if the "cutting edge" were lowered to include all young persons in the upper half of ability, the total reservoir of young people able to profit from college instruction would approximate an additional 600,000 per year. If it is desired to raise the "cutting edge" and deal with the relatively smaller group of gifted or superior students, for example, in the highest tenth of ability, presumably the same proportion would hold. The number of young people in this highest level of ability may be estimated on an annual basis at approximately 120,000.

The potential value to society of the services of these superior young people was recently emphasized by President Pusey of Harvard in his *Fortune* article. Commenting upon the dual character of the task of higher education he made this significant statement:

It is a truism that the continued growth in quality of civilization depends less on numbers (even numbers of engineers) than on fresh insights, extraordinary efforts, and novel achievements by a few individuals of exceptional ability who, having received the necessary exacting training, are encouraged to go beyond average attainment. Thus, although our future educational practice must make place for large numbers, it is of even greater importance that we now turn more seriously to the additional task of developing an exciting and demanding kind of formal education, designed fully to draw out the ablest members of each age group.³

³ Nathan M. Pusey. "The Exploding World of Education." *Fortune*, LII: 96-97 and 198-204 (September 1955).

The failure of large numbers of the ablest persons in our population to secure a college education is not only a serious loss to the personal development of such individuals, but a serious loss to the nation of critically needed manpower at the highest level of training. In 1940, there were 2,580,000 18-year-olds in the total United States population of approximately 132,000,000. In the estimated population for 1955, there were only 2,160,000 18-year-olds. The 18-year-old population level of 1940 will not again be reached until 1960 when it is estimated our total population will approximate 175,000,000. From this present minimum manpower pool we must fulfill not only our immediate needs for additional scientific, teaching, technical, and other leadership personnel but for the rank and file of trained personnel as well. Here is a great potential not now utilized, the source of future service and leadership of superior talent.

It should be observed that these estimates of the annual untouched potential are relatively conservative and would represent rather modest additions to the present college enrollment of approximately 3 million students. Moreover, these projections are modest in relation to the estimate by the President's Commission on Higher Education of the percentage of persons who could with profit to themselves and society embark upon college training. Using its "National Inventory of Talent," based upon the AGCT test results, the Commission indicated that approximately one half of the population had the mental ability to complete the first two years of college work. It also estimated that one

third of the appropriate age group could successfully complete an advanced liberal or professional education.

Recent studies of the Commission on Human Resources and Advanced Training indicate that the number of college graduates could be doubled without loss of quality. The Commission further stated:

Practically all potentially good college students enter, and most of them finish high school, but after high school the loss is large. Fewer than half of the upper 25 per cent of all high school graduates ever earn college degrees; only 6 out of 10 of the top 5 per cent do. Society fails to secure the full benefit of many of its brightest youth because they do not secure the education that would enable them to work at the levels for which they are potentially qualified.⁴

Some Future Trends

It is quite evident that higher education during the next two decades faces serious problems and developments. Among many possibilities, several of the more important ones are dealt with in the balance of this article.

Broader economic and cultural representation in student bodies. Along with rapidly increasing college enrollments, our higher institutions continue to enroll a more representative group of young adults. It becomes clearer that the "democratization" process which has characterized secondary education during recent decades is well under way in higher education. No longer do most college students come from families of the upper socioeconomic groups whose fathers hold professional and managerial positions. More and more students, particularly those in community colleges,

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⁴ Dael Wolfe. *America's Resources of Specialized Talent; a Current Appraisal and a Look Ahead.* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954. p. 269.

the publicly controlled institutions and urban universities, come from the skilled labor, middle class and other homes of modest circumstances. This phenomenon, together with the considerable percentage of students who are self-supporting, provokes frequent comments of admiration from visiting foreign educators.

Greater significance of the community college. The phenomenal expansion of the community (junior) colleges, in terms of student enrollment, number of units and curriculums, has been a very important postwar development. The increasing prosperity of more occupational groups and the economic demands for workers with college training of less than degree length are important causative factors. Increasing demands for workers in the technical and semiprofessional fields (such as engineering, agriculture and the health fields) underline the important services of this new educational unit. Administrators and parents also readily recognize the substantial economies offered by community colleges located in the larger and middle-sized urban centers of population. Community colleges offering a variety of part-time adult educational services in the vocational, citizenship and the general education areas are playing an important role in the expansion of educational opportunities for employed persons.

Larger enrollments of women students. Higher education with its emphasis upon research, graduate work and professional education historically has been frequently thought of as the monopoly of men. Beginning a century ago with the introduction of coeducation and the founding of colleges for women, greater opportunities were made available for more women college students. Since

World War II, the enrollment of women has increased rapidly until this autumn, for the first time in the nation's history, more than a million women students will be enrolled in the colleges and universities. Women's contributions, particularly in the arts, in teaching, social work and business during the coming decade of the shortage of professional personnel will be of increasing value and importance.

Greater proportion of college students attending public institutions. Although the enrollments of privately controlled higher institutions during the coming decade will almost certainly not remain stationary as recommended nine years ago by the President's Commission on Higher Education, neither are they likely to absorb their proportionate share of the increased enrollments. Most of the recent state surveys referred to in the earlier portion of this article indicate clearly that the public institutions will be required to expand facilities and faculty staffs to accommodate the "tidal wave." It appears likely, therefore, that in place of the approximate equal division of students between public and private higher institutions which has prevailed in recent years, the nation will likely repeat the trend in secondary education.

Expansion of college opportunities to train for semiprofessional and technical fields. Historically, higher education has been identified with training for the "learned professions" of law, medicine, philosophy and theology. In recent years, however, American colleges and universities have enlarged their programs to train for many newer fields and for careers in business, government and industry. Recent studies of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Labor

Department indicate that during the next 20 years the nation's total labor force will be increased by 21 millions and that large increases of 27 to 75 per cent are projected in the following fields: professional and technical, clerical and sales, craftsmen, operatives and service workers.⁵ Most of these occupations will demand more general and vocational education than is currently available in most high schools. There are indications that community colleges

⁵ House Committee on Education and Labor. *State Committees on Education Beyond the High School*. Hearing held June 25, July 12 and 13, 1956 (84th Congress, 2d Session). p. 33-35.

and urban universities will probably meet much of this demand.

This brief article does not permit a detailed analysis and consideration of other higher education developments anticipated in the coming decades. It is quite evident that many will represent a projection of present discernible trends. It is also clear that these developments will impose heavy responsibilities upon all college administrators and teachers. However, they also provide a great challenge and opportunity to serve the Nation's young people and assist them in contributing to America's progress and international peace.

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A School Project in

Preventive Mental Hygiene

A case history of the Rye Project in Human Relations and Mental Health, this article indicates several important implications.

IN THE winter of 1952, the Westchester Mental Hygiene Association received a gift of \$15,000, with the stipulation that it be used to improve mental health in the area of Rye, New York. The association, after investigation, turned the money over to the Rye Board of Education to finance a two-year pilot program for preventive mental hygiene. This fund enabled the Board of Education to hire the author, an educational psychologist, as a full-time consultant to the program.

A description of the first year of operation and of the underlying rationale of the project has been outlined in a pre-

vious article.¹ The purpose of the present article is to review the first year of the project, to report on the second year and its consequences, and to make some recommendations based on these experiences.

The basic purpose of the Rye Project was to go a step beyond the usual area of preventive mental hygiene—namely, the attempt to spot and help pupils who are suffering from emotional problems or who seem headed for emotional diffi-

¹ K. Helfant. "A Project in Human Relations and Mental Health." *Educational Leadership*, April 1954. p. 434-39.

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