

*Partnership between the world of scholarship and the world of work must reflect the best interests of these areas and also those of society in general.*

## College —and the World of Work

**E. C. HARRISON**

Vice President of Academic Affairs  
Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

A CHANGING relationship exists between the college and the world of work. This relationship has been gaining in importance since World War II and especially since Sputnik; it has led to a reexamination of practically all aspects of the American school system.

Understanding the developing relationship between the college and the world of work requires giving some consideration to the two major beneficiaries of both college and work. These are the individual student, for whom preparation for work is essential, and society, which is dependent on the products and services of individual workers.

### Personal Factors

Inevitably, an individual who contemplates collegiate training is confronted with the tasks of career selection and preparation. Involved here are certain personal factors which have commanded intensive research interest. Although it is recognized that the personal factors which influence career selection and preparation are numerous, this discussion will be limited to preparation and ability, vocational commit-

ment, training goals, and personality characteristics.

Generally, the persons with the most extensive training can be expected to reach the highest level of achievement in the world of work. More schooling increasingly is being required for entry into the world of work. As emphasized by Havemann and West, "College graduates hold the key jobs in our society. The noncollege man who rises to the top is a relative rarity."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, there is a positive relationship between intelligence and success. Brighter individuals tend to be found in the more advanced or better jobs. Moreover, it has been observed that individuals tend "to gravitate toward occupational levels and toward jobs appropriate to the level of their ability."<sup>2</sup>

While it can be reliably documented that the individuals with the highest level of intelligence tend to experience the greatest job success and satisfaction,

<sup>1</sup>Earnest Havemann and Patricia West. *They Went to College*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1951.

<sup>2</sup>D. E. Super. *The Psychology of Careers*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1957. p. 204.

the relationship of grades to job performance and to other success factors has not been clearly established.

Pertinent are the results of Ginzberg's study of talent and performance.<sup>3</sup> In a sample of 342 persons, it was revealed that those individuals who had received academic honors as undergraduates were not as likely to be at the top achievement level in their respective jobs as were those who did not earn honor awards. Significantly, the findings were reversed among those who had pursued graduate study.

Those who had earned the highest graduate average tended to be at the top achievement level in their respective jobs. In view of the fact that the graduate average represented academic performance in a specialized field and since the undergraduate average represented academic performance in several fields, the study may have revealed a positive relationship between academic performance in a specialized field and the level of performance in a related position.

An early commitment to a vocation helps to give the student a sense of identity, especially since the selection is influenced by the perception that the student has of himself.

In addition to developing a sense of identity, commitment to a vocation serves to give both unity and meaning to collegiate experience. Of further significance is the tendency for students who are career oriented to be more likely to succeed in college. As supported by Ifert, "Students who maintained their interest in subject-fields

distinctly occupational in character had the highest persistence and graduation rate."<sup>4</sup>

Related both to vocational preparation and vocational commitment is the individual's perception of the goals of the training. Many are inclined to attribute differences in performance to differences in training. It has been observed, however, that often individuals with the same training experience differ in their job performance. In some instances differences in motivation are involved. Involved also may be differences in the individual's understanding of the meaning of the training in its relationship to job performance.

To put it differently, the effect of training on job performance may well be conditioned by the individual's perceived goals of the training. Support for this possibility is found in the result of Swinth's study of training goals and subsequent performance. In his study, "the individual trained to seek the goal which maximized the system was superior to the individual trained to seek the goal which maximized one component in subsequent task performance where both system and component goal tasks must be performed."<sup>5</sup>

Generally, it has been assumed that certain personality traits are essential to job success. Yet, as notes Super, "little is now known about just which personality traits make for success or failure in a given occupation."<sup>6</sup> Accord-

<sup>4</sup> Robert E. Ifert. *Retention and Withdrawal of College Students*. U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Office of Education Bulletin 1958, No. 1. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1958. p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> R. L. Swinth. "Certain Effects of Training Goals on Subsequent Task Performance." *Occupational Psychology* 40 (3): 153-65; 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Eli Ginzberg and John L. Herman. *Talent and Performance*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964. Chapter 6.

---

**for Regular Classroom Work  
or Special Remedial Programs**

**Continental's  
Liquid Duplicating Materials...**

... modern, convenient, effective teaching aids that provide great flexibility of usage. No grade level is indicated on the pages so that the teacher can select materials from various levels to use according to students' needs.

**Over 220 titles** in preprinted carbon masters for liquid duplicating

**MATHEMATICS** (modern, transitional, and traditional)  
**ENGLISH**  
**READING READINESS**  
**READING-THINKING SKILLS — PHONICS**  
**SCIENCE — HEALTH — SOCIAL STUDIES**  
**OUTLINE MAPS**  
**GUIDANCE — SPECIAL EDUCATION**

For information about these publications, write for a Complete Catalog.

**THE CONTINENTAL PRESS, INC.**  
Elizabethtown, Pa. 17022

---



ing to Ginzberg, high grades in graduate school plus good personality qualities are indicative of a high level of achievement in career.<sup>7</sup> The problem of identifying relationship of specific personality traits to career performance is seen in another statement by Ginzberg "... men who were considered by their teachers to be colorless were much more likely to be in the lower achievement level than those whose personalities had been assessed as unattractive."<sup>8</sup>

Modern society is experiencing unprecedented revolutionary developments, the effects of which have created new relationships between man and his social institutions. One of these developments has been the science of cybernet-

<sup>6</sup> Super, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

<sup>7</sup> Ginzberg, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

ics or automation. Initially, the effect of automation was felt primarily at the unskilled and semi-skilled levels, but the prospect of managers and professionals being displaced by machines as the capabilities of these machines are raised is real, indeed.

Continued development of modern technology as well as modern society will depend on the availability of trained manpower. It is no wonder that, in recent years, investment in education rather than investment in land and machines has become the decisive factor in economic growth.

### **Task of the College**

The college is confronted with new and compelling demands. Contrary to its traditional role as an institution existing in isolation from the affairs of man, it is now generally accepted that the college must relate to the needs and goals of the national economy. In view of the swiftly changing nature of events, goals and deeds must be reexamined and redefined continuously. And it is the job of the college to assume the leadership in this effort. The role of the college, then, is twofold: mobilizing social, economic, and political forces for defining society's need for trained talent, on the one hand, and providing a program for development of this talent, on the other.

Acceptance of this commitment means that the educational program of the college should be oriented to the development of personalities who can cope with the revolutionary characteristics of modern times; who are broadly trained; who can analyze and synthesize; and who have employable skills.

But the traditional collegiate pro-

gram cannot accomplish this task. There is need for a program that is problem oriented rather than subject-matter oriented, thus providing opportunities for students to apply knowledge to the solution of problems.

In view of the importance of work to both the individual and the economy, provisions need to be made for encouraging students to commit themselves early to a career. Such early commitment need not be permanent, but could give unity to collegiate experience.

Students and faculty members must be informed on the present and projected character of the industrial system, including the organizational structure, management practices, training needs, and research programs. This will enable the college to plan creative and imaginative programs designed for development of talent which can function successfully in our technical society.

The foregoing suggests that the college should establish a network of communication with the world of work. There are several promising approaches to this objective. One involves an organized program of personnel exchange between the college and private and public agencies.

This would provide opportunities for college personnel periodically to receive extra-college experience as scientists, consultants, researchers, and administrators. A teacher who has had experience in industry or in government service can relate his instruction more effectively to the world of work. Like-

wise, arrangements can be made for industrial personnel to spend time on college campuses as lecturers, research advisers and assistants, and as consultants on program planning.

Another aspect of this communication network involves arranging for the student to alternate periods of employment in the world of work and schooling during his undergraduate years. Such experience enables the student to assess his capabilities, to acquire vocational information, to understand the meaning of work, and to relate his studies to work.

The changing nature of events strongly suggests the need for the colleges, individually or jointly, with the help of personnel from the world of work, to establish a task force of specialists to study continuously the present and probable future characteristics of the general economy.

It is apparent that helping to supply modern society with knowledge and trained personnel is a legitimate function of the college. This does not imply that the college should be completely subordinated in its functions to the needs of industry or to the industrial system, for the goals of industry may not always be consistent with the best interests of society or of the individual. The partnership between the college and the world of work must be an ever-increasing relationship that reflects not only the best interests of the world of scholarship and the world of work, but the best interests of society in general.



Copyright © 1968 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.