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HE Academic Enrichment and Learning Skills Center was opened March 10, 1969, at Indiana State University at Terre Haute. The purpose of this facility is to provide academic aid for the student body of the University.

Over the years it became obvious that a substantial number of Indiana State's students were coming to the University lacking many of the basic learning skills, and with a poverty of academic breadth and enrichment in their backgrounds. This fact was underlined by the high percentage of dropouts and failures.

The inability to read lies at the base of the major problems which a student encounters in his course work. Without the ability to read effectively, he is unable to assemble facts and draw rational conclusions. The inability to think freely has often been stunted in these students due to other deficiencies in their academic backgrounds. In this paper there is no effort to pinpoint the actual source of the educational breakdown, which, when it does occur, leaves the students at a loss to realize their potential abilities. Rather we will note these well-known facts and will indicate the basic need and purpose of departments such as the Academic Enrichment and Learning Skills Center.

There are numerous facilities about the country whose purposes are closely related to those of the one at Indiana State Univer-

sity. However, their operations are often limited to the areas of reading and study skills. There is, in numerous cases, little relationship between the centers and the departments of the university other than the English department.

In some cases students are required, due to obvious deficiencies, to attend remedial classes and are granted one semester hour's credit. These classes usually meet for a semester with a professor who has voiced an interest in such students. Too often the skills centers are poorly housed, inadequately staffed, and exist only by the smallest margin of cost to the university. Large numbers of those remaining are used by a very small percentage of the students on campus and appear to be literally dying away.

The Center at Indiana State University is well supported. It serves entire classes in the areas of music, education, mathematics, and English. The offerings are rich and the rooms are attractively arranged. The general decor is such that no student feels that he has been pushed into a corner and caused to

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lose self-respect when using the facility. The bright, well-equipped laboratories are comfortable, and tutors for all major areas of academic work are available, with no cost to the student. Student part-time help is used, with 10 to 14 persons per semester. These students are chosen because of their special "know-how" in certain problem courses.

In addition to the part-time student helpers, there are four graduate assistants who assist with instruction and general operation of the Center's routine. There are three full-time employees consisting of the director, an assistant to the director, and a supervisor of the laboratories, who serves also as a liaison person to the faculty. A full-time secretary-receptionist is also a member of the complete staff.

When this Center was planned, it was discussed, first of all, by a committee representing students, faculty, and administrators. The vice president in charge of student affairs met with the committee, which was visited by and received suggestions from other administrative persons. After general agreement was reached as to the desirability of such a center, the committee ceased to function. At this time a possible director who had served on the committee from the School of Education was selected to complete the planning, subject to the approval of the University Administration, the Faculty Council, and the Board of Trustees. This direct planning was begun in November of 1968.

One item which is considered basic to the evolving Center is that it became a part of the department of the vice president for academic affairs. This has proved to be a valuable decision, since the purpose of the Center is considered to be directly related to the instructional program of the university.

The facility is housed in a building which also houses the Counseling Center. The Center is adjacent to the main campus quadrangle and is easily accessible to students. Eight rooms are now in use and all of them serve a specific purpose of the Center.

There are two laboratory-console sets of equipment, providing a total of 60 student positions. Each laboratory is operated from



Photos courtesy of the author
Graduate assistants help with tutoring and with operating the Center.

completely different consoles. This variation of equipment makes it possible for education students to acquaint themselves with two widely different sets of equipment. It is felt to be a tremendous asset, inasmuch as the greater number of students going out to teach have had little or no experience with mechanical devices such as the laboratories. In this Center, such students may study all of the equipment until they are no longer intimidated by it. Much equipment has been purchased by school systems during the plentiful period of the availability of federal funds. Few centers have been able to continue in operation after the federal funding was discontinued.

Gotkin and McSweeney state:

In a society worried by great changes and automation, it is little wonder that the concept of teaching machines is sometimes associated with fear and resistance. The resistance in educational and psychological circles to the available teaching machines in the past must be examined in terms of operational inadequacy of those machines, their programming, and exorbitant claims made for them. In one way or another most of those who have worked



Programmed material is selected to meet specific needs.

in the teaching-machine and programmed-instruction movement have been guilty of selling a host of good ideas prematurely.¹

We would like to identify and discuss four factors which contributed to the failure of the "first teaching-machine revolution." Our choice of issues is based upon our belief that these are most important among those that need to be resolved if the "second teaching-machine revolution," upon which we are now entering, is to be successful. The issues are apparent in the valid major criticisms that have been made and documented:

1. The first teaching machines were unreliable.
2. These machines were not necessary for what was being taught.
3. The machines themselves restricted programmers.
4. Programmers had little knowledge as to the art of teaching by machines.

The Center under discussion is one that uses reliable machines with excellent pro-

¹Lassar G. Gotkin and Joseph McSweeney. "Learning From Teaching Machines." In: Phil C. Lange, editor. *Programed Instruction*. Sixty-Sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967. pp. 259-60.

grammed material which is selected for remediation or enrichment on the basis of proven needs of students.

One room of the Center is used for programmed material for the Didactor. Since a great number of the student population need help in grammar and sentence structure, programs have been selected to meet those needs. Similar "brush-up" material is provided for the areas of math, chemistry, spelling, and reading.

Speed reading is accomplished through the use of the Tachomatic "500," which disciplines the eye while pacing the student. Accompanying literature permits the student to keep check upon his progress. The Craig Reader is used also but reaches further down for correction of bad habits developed during previous educational experiences. A sound program of spelling is provided on tape, and many students have used it and have reported good results.

The Hoffman Reader is used in the Center with foreign students. It is generally factual material which is seen, heard, and responded to in written work. This material has proved to be exceptionally useful with foreign students who are having "concept" trouble with English.

A very important point of view demonstrated in the Center is that of belief in the crucial relationship between a student's success and his self-image. The atmosphere is cheerful, encouraging, and businesslike. When a student first comes for help he is requested to complete a form which, besides general information, gives the interviewer a statement by the student as to what he considers to be his problem and interests. Courses in which he is currently enrolled are listed, with the names of the professors teaching those courses (for correlation as needed), and the index from the previous semester also is recorded.

The interviewer takes the time necessary to explore the student's needs which he may not have recorded. It has been learned that students, on coming to the Center, are very evasive and tend to rationalize their problems. Every effort is made to permit the student to talk freely and without embar-

rassment about his academic weaknesses. He has access to a member of the full-time staff by appointment and is requested to come for an interview at the end of any prescribed study course. He may or may not, as he desires, continue. Many of the students, after they complete work on one deficiency, go on for enrichment or help in another area.

The full-time staff counsels and advises students. The actual laboratory work, however, is supervised by one member of the staff, who directs the part-time student help, the tutors, and the graduate assistants. All students employed in the Center are taught to operate each of the consoles as well as the various teaching machines. Another member of the staff is assistant to the director and is in charge of teaching materials, cataloging the materials, and assisting with the budget. He also serves as special helper to Freshman Opportunity classes.

The Freshman Opportunity Program provides a special route for high school students who graduate in the lowest 30 percent of their high school classes. They are admitted with an academic load not to exceed 13 semester hours during spring semester and are required to work in the Center for clock hours equivalent to three semester hours without credit. During the two 5-week summer sessions the students may enroll in one course of their choice, together with the three-semester-hour course in the Center.

The service to this special group of students has shown positive results. The previous figures of approximately 40-50 percent failure have dropped to approximately 12 percent. Of course, it should be noted that other special centers on campus have, no doubt, influenced the drop.

The role of the director or supervisor of the Center is that of maintaining a fully functioning laboratory for students on the Indiana State campus. The director is responsible for budget planning with the assistant to the director. Statistical figures reflecting use of the Center are maintained in this office. Selection and ordering of materials together with general supervision of the operating system all come under the



Students acquaint themselves with different sets of equipment.

director with the help of the assistant to the office.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the entire operation of the Center is that it is geared to demonstrated needs of students who are enrolled at Indiana State University. It should be stated that the Center described here is not offering a "cure-all" program. The motivation of the student plays a key role in his pattern for success.

Another point that should be noted is that the faith of the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees in this project made it possible to establish the Center with University funds instead of federal grants. The result is an ongoing program which will not have to feel the letdown that inevitably goes with loss of support.

The Center, as it exists, is a busy, growing facility which offers tremendous opportunities for the student who needs skill building, and to upperclassmen and graduate students as well. It offers rich opportunities for research. It also provides help for a new and rapidly growing service to a program of Continuing Education for Women. This latter program is comparatively new to Indiana State but is currently attracting many young married women who wish to continue their interrupted education. Thus, the Academic Enrichment and Learning Skills Center continues to expand and serve a great variety of interests on this university campus. □

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