Let US Be the University

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Abstract

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A FEW MONTHS AGO the president of the SUI Alumni Association let loose a blast aimed at Iowa State College (of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts). The general idea of his complaint was that Iowa State College was getting too big for its britches, was aiming at teaching fields of study that should be reserved to the University, and was getting a good deal too much support from the federal government. While we cannot agree with the gentleman in all his conclusions, we think there’s a good deal of food for thought in his complaints.

What is a university? A university is a large school teaching almost everything, with no set limits on what it can or cannot do. What is a college? A college is supposed to be smaller than a university, and is supposed to teach in somewhat more limited fields. Now here in Iowa we have the situation reversed. The State College is larger than the State University; the State College teaches in almost as many fields as the University; the State College gets more federal support than the University. What’s the answer?

Obviously, if the University would like to grow larger, more wealthy, and more educationally ubiquitous than the State College, it must imitate that college. Let Iowa City become the college for the next ten years, and Ames the university. By that time Iowa City will have more students than we have, and more money, and it will be our turn to play at being big sister again — the big sister being the college.

This would in no way harm the people of Iowa. We here in Ames produce engineers, but so does Iowa City, so there is no problem there. Scientists and home economics students are found at both places; again no problem. Any casual observer might believe that the medical school at Iowa City could hardly be shifted to Ames, but it is our contention that there again the problem is more imaginary than real.

A veterinarian is a man who treats animals; human beings are animals; therefore a veterinarian is a man who treats human beings. And we have no doubt that among the M.D.’s graduating from the SUI medical school is many a man who
could learn, in time, to minister properly to cows and goats.

The law school problem could be met in the same way; let the department of industrial economics take on the instruction of the budding lawyers of the state. The graduates from such a course would be not only brainier but louder than the present crop. Dentistry and pharmacy we can ignore. Fluorine and penicillin will make those fields of study obsolete in a few years.

Finally, there is one argument that must certainly be decisive so far as Ames is concerned. The state of athletics at Iowa State College is a matter of permanent and perilous interest. Wherever a few alumni are gathered together the topic is always in the forefront of conversation, and the students seldom speak of anything else as they mutter in their sleep, disturbed by the professor's periods. Let us be the university, and then watch us! The Big Seven is to the Big Ten in athletic strength, as federal support for ISC is to such support for SUI—about five to one. The Iowa State track team was beaten by Nebraska and Missouri; it may very well lose to Kansas State and Oklahoma. But it walloped Minnesota last weekend. In every sport down to quoits the Big Seven is tough. Just let ISC into the Big Ten, and then watch the fur fly. Once let SUI meet Oklahoma in football, and there'd be an 830 Club in Iowa City.

The easiest way out for all concerned is for Iowa State to become the Iowa State University of Liberal, Scientific, Medical and Pharmaceutical Arts; let Iowa City be The State College of Agricultural, Engineering, Home Economics, Veterinarian, Scientific and Utilitarian training. SUI will soon become known as the Veterans Hospital Annex, anyway.