Student-Teacher Gripes

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Sketch

get going . . . gotta go back and do my share of the work . . .
as long as I’ve gone this far . . . I’ll finish . . . I’m no quitter!"

The two men started toward the door . . . the crying blues continued . . . but neither one of them noticed its sadness . . .

—Dave Anderson, T. Jl., Sr.

Student-Teacher Gripe

IOWA STATE is an institution for education. The faculty is here to teach. The student is here to learn. These are ideals.

In reality the teaching and learning processes often do not function in perfect harmony. In order to locate the notes of discord we have questioned both students and instructors at Iowa State who voice this criticism of one another.

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Here is how some of Iowa State’s 9,000 students criticize instructors and their teaching methods.

Too many repeat only material in the text and do not supplement with additional information. “I feel we’re entitled to additional information,” says a junior in home economics. About the instructor who has written the text used in the course, “He just rambles in lecture,” says a vet med student. The comment of one of Iowa State’s foreign students was, “The instructor should show a real need for his or her presence—anyone can read a text without coming to college.”

A large number of instructors are too research-minded and not teaching-minded. After 6 years at ISC a vet med student’s comment was, “Many instructors know the subject in their own right but don’t know how to put it across in class.”
Graduate students and others out of college only a few years lack practical and teaching experience. A junior in engineering complained that a large number of grad students were teaching advanced engineering courses which he feels are professor or doctor level. His feeling was, "They don't know the points to stress and what details to leave in the book."

Some instructors are uninterested in the subject; others overly enthusiastic. Says a freshman girl in home economics, "The instructor's attitude sets the pattern for the class and determines the degree of interest of the students." Over enthusiasm sometimes proceeds to the point of "narrow mindedness," as one student expressed it.

Make too many generalizations in lecture and not enough specific facts or ideas. One senior woman in home economics education expressed the feeling, "If there were just one fact to take home at the end of lecture."

Basis for grading is inadequate. A freshman student in forestry asks for more smaller tests—doesn't see how instructor "can fairly base a grade on how much you talk in class."

Class discussion should supplement lectures, not become a "crutch" on which the instructor relies. The statement, "I'd rather have a professor come to class with a 50-minute prepared lecture, crammed full of information," comes from a science senior. A senior in agriculture says, "Use class discussion to clear up particular points in the text or lecture."

Assignments are often given on too short a notice, vague and sometimes really of little value in relation to the course material.

Instructors have their gripes too, and some of them have expressed these comments concerning the students in classes.

Put too much emphasis on grades and not enough on ideas. A professor in the English Department stressed this point, "Grades are only an indication of what has been learned and preoccupation with them does not make a better student."

Lack interest and enthusiasm toward learning. A second complaint against the student comes from another in the
English Department, “Learning must be an active process; what the student learns is directly proportional to his effort.”

Students' attitude toward the subject and the course will “make or break the class.” To an instructor in Religious Education whose classes are small discussion types, “Students don’t realize what effect their behavior in class can have upon the receptiveness of other students and the ability of the instructor to communicate to them.”

Many students are not working up to their ability. Says a young instructor in the Modern Language Department, “A good student who won’t try for improvement is discouraging to the instructor and is a bad influence on the other students. He is also cheating himself and his class.”

A great many students are immature, lack courtesy, discipline and responsibility. A mutual feeling was expressed by an instructor in Applied Art and Air Science Departments, “General thoughtlessness in cleaning up labs, shops and equipment shows either a lack of, or failure to apply pre-college training. This applies as well to the student’s outward attitude toward instructors, inside and outside of the classroom.”

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Whose side can you take—well, really neither. Each student has his own goal in college and every instructor or professor his own method or “plan” of teaching. Criticism serves only to help students define and strengthen their goals and instructors to evaluate their teaching methods.

Perhaps the statement of one professor could be the key to better harmony in education. He said that the student’s indifference toward counseling help which is available is “discouraging.”

We feel that perhaps both students and instructors are often discouraged . . . .

Instructors, when students appear to care little about obtaining help, and—

Students, when instructors seem aloof to the student viewpoint and individual needs.

We feel that here is the common meeting ground!

—Millie Willet, H. Ec., Sr.