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How Well Do You Know Your Faculty?

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FOR years Iowa State students, as well as scholars throughout the nation, have been brought face to face with the problem of student-faculty relations. Nor is it their problem alone. Faculty members on the other side of the fence have had their share of difficulties to confront. It is an eternal conflict.

SUSY. There is Susy, a timid young thing who started college with the firm thought ingrained in her mind that grades meant success. To fall behind anyone in anything was to admit defeat. So Susy studied and studied and studied.

Some of Susy's friends remembered she used to sing in high school and had an excellent voice, but her one-time ambition to join a college music organization was lost in the mad scramble of being "perfect." Susy didn't talk much to anyone and her counselor never suspected the internal strife of her "A" student. If Susy had broken down a little, her counselor could have told her she was going off the deep end.

JOE. And then there's Joe. Joe wanted to be a campus wheel, heap glory upon his fraternity and graduate into a public relations position that meant money. Joe went places, all right. And he did well in the courses he liked. But Joe just couldn't see English nor any good reason for taking it.

Well, Joe didn't do so well. He flunked an English course or two, got into a jam with his department and took out his ill feeling by building a case against the English instructor. Most of Joe's fraternity brothers and most of their girls heard about the "poorest excuse for a staff member the college ever had." Some of the boys even got to complaining to the department head if they happened to have that instructor scheduled. Joe was a wheel, all right, and he really blew up a lot of wind.

AL. Al really wasn't such a bad kid. He came from a middle-income family who couldn't afford to send him to school. He had to work part-time and he got tired at nights. But Al did fairly well. He kept up on all his subjects except physics. Al was no physicist. He tried studying, but his mind would bog down on some essential point he couldn't comprehend, and he'd be lost.

Al flunked all the tests, one after another; he began to hate the stuff. Fear of flunking the course entirely made him desperate. He'd heard the older boys speak of cribs, ways of passing if you were smart . . . he'd heard of the back-filled bluebook, which you erased before handing in. So he tried it. The first time he got by and managed a D. But the next exam involved a real understanding of theory, and even his crib didn't help.

Student Regulations

There are other case histories. As many incidents between student and staff member have occurred as there have been students and faculty members. Instructors have put up with much, too.

John Holmes, assistant director of personnel at Iowa State, comments: "Certain standards of behavior are learned long before an individual reaches college. No set rules or regulations can convince a student he should not cheat or skip class or disregard the hour limits. If the individual hasn't formed a set of standards by the time he's in college, no faculty member or rule will form it for him. It is for the immature and wrongly-guided student that regulations are made, not necessarily to reform him but to hold him in line."

Other instructors comment: "If I handed out back-files of my lecture notes or examinations, I would be stealing from the student a free lesson in organization.
In an attempt to keep in step with furious pace required in most classes, students neglect getting acquainted with the faculty. A teacher usually leaves it up to her students to pick out the main points, a good test of their understanding of the course. Handing out material already organized for them, like telling them each question that will be asked in an exam, is not teaching students but teaching facts. A puppet-student learns only facts. A real student grasps facts out of the whole picture.

Exam Complex

Another cry arises from the student who has the "what good's an exam" complex. Carol tries hard on her tests. But in one of her courses she misses the boat on what the teacher is after. When she gets her test back, no matter how hard she's studied, the grade is "C." Each time she thinks if she can only have time to look the thing over, she'll be able to study the right thing before the next exam. But each time the test is handed back just before class ends, and she has only time to scan hurriedly through it. If Carol were sharp, she'd schedule a conference with her instructor and go in and look over the exam at leisure.

But Iowa State's student and staff members have not remained asleep to such situations. In the spring of 1942, a group of students, anxious to improve courses and to increase student-faculty cooperativeness at the college, formed the Home Economics Core Curriculum Committee. One result was the student-faculty teas, a casual get-together for both students and faculty. Freshman zoology was combined with human physiology, making a 5-hour credit course. Costume design now precedes the general textiles course, so that students may learn how to select and judge clothing in their freshman year. On the basis of a pre-test, students enrolled in clothing construction are classified into sections according to their abilities.

A survey was made by the core-curriculum committee in 1946. A sampling of sophomores was quizzed to determine the value of freshman courses. Results were tabulated and discussed, changes made in the courses and counseling system and a new counselor for all home economics students was hired. She is Miss Elizabeth T. Sheerer, personnel counselor for home economics women.

Nor has all effort stopped here. This fall freshmen were invited during Freshman Days to visit a number of faculty homes. Here personal contact preceded classroom exposure, and a more friendly basis was set up immediately.

Employers' Qualifications

So things aren't really at a hopeless standstill. Counselors are beginning to pass on to their counselees good, factual hints on "what goes" in the business world. After Activity Joe has both feet on the ground and is made to realize the ever-present importance of LEARNING first and LEADING afterward, his counselor might bring out a few pointers. Some of these pointers might pertain to an article, "What Qualities Do Employers Seek?" by Frank S. Endicott, director of placement at Northwestern University, in which the following results are given: Seventy percent of business organizations gave preference to those who had earned all or part of their way through college; only 20 percent of interviewees indicated high marks were essential, especially for research and technical positions. One large corporation replied as follows: "We give no preference to high marks alone. We prefer students who are all-around individuals, who have attained maturity, who possess work experience and who have adapted themselves to practical situations in industry. High marks are not always indicative of abilities although there is some correlation."

Iowa State students are initiating the doing, today. The faculty is paralleling their effort along a workable track. "This is one of the best fall quarters I've experienced in years," Dean Helser asserts. "Everything is working more smoothly in laboratories and classes . . . I've received less complaint from both students and faculty."

Such is the optimistic note for increased harmony in the future between student and faculty at Iowa State.