Improving Student Life in the University of Maine 1980

Trustee ad hoc Committee on Student Life

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Improving Student Life in the University of Maine 1980
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A PUBLICATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

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Improving Student Life
in the
University of Maine

1980

A
Report
Submitted by
Trustee ad hoc Committee on Student Life

April 1980
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Foreword

Francis Brown, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Maine, in May 1979 appointed a Trustee ad hoc Committee on Student Life. "Paramount to the University statement of mission," he said, "is the obligation and concern for the academic welfare of its primary clients, the students."

Chancellor Patrick E. McCarthy asked the staff to research past material affecting student affairs. He and Chairman Brown agreed that "such issues as campus environment, program balance, support services, tuition and fees, and transferability are directly related to the quality of academic life of the campus and to the fundamental goals of the University."

The Committee was organized in August of 1979. Trustee Alan M. Elkins was named Chairman. Members of the Committee included four trustees, two student affairs administrators, eight students, and four faculty members.

Meetings were held monthly, beginning in September. Dr. Elkins was appointed by the Governor in November to study Maine's mental health programs. His place as Chairman was filled by Trustee John Robinson. Trustee Elkins resumed his chairmanship in February and guided the Committee's deliberations to the completion of this Report.

The extensive materials that had been researched and developed by staff as an introduction to the topic were reviewed by the Committee, and in the early deliberations the members identified more than 70 topics on student life for further inquiry and data acquisition. The Committee received memoranda and position papers from interested persons on all seven campuses.
In February 1980, the committee issued a Statement, "Critical Issues of Student Life," which was distributed to all campuses with the purpose of eliciting comment and reaction from all parts of the University community.

In March, Open Forums were conducted by the Committee on each of the campuses to hear expressions on the subject of student life from students, faculty and administrative personnel. Written comments also were invited and were received by the Committee from every campus.

This Report, the result of the hearings and study of the Trustee ad hoc Committee on Student Life, has been shaped by the thinking of hundreds of vitally interested members of the University community.
Introduction

The Committee believes that no investigation of the character and quality of the lives of the students of the University of Maine can be conducted without reference to the educational mission of the University. The University is an academic institution and has no other reason for being. It exists to provide post-secondary education to its students.* It follows that students attend the University in order to become educated.

While the term “student life” is sometimes used in a narrow sense as referring to the social, residential, recreational, and environmental aspects of a student’s years at the University, the Committee has chosen to interpret its charge more broadly. It wishes to examine student life within the context of the University’s educational mission. It asks whether the various features of student life contribute to or detract from the creation of a community of scholars.

*This report will use the word “student” to describe every student in the University. Qualifying terms, such as “part-time,” “non-traditional,” “non-matriculating,” “adult,” etc., while sometimes useful in pinpointing identification, carry somewhat pejorative connotations which distinguish those to whom they refer unfavorably from the “full-time, 18-to-22, college-degree” student. Far from being “traditional,” the four-year dorm-living, post-high school student is in the minority on many campuses. While by no means unwelcome, he/she is one of the many types of students, all of whom represent a diversity to be desired, and whose presence challenges the University to develop a broad and flexible concept of “student life.”
In the course of our study, we have learned something of the complex character of student life in this University. It consists of a myriad of diverse elements. Attempts to improve student life in the past have addressed single issues, creating a series of fractional attempts to repair problems when they became serious enough to notice. In attacking this forest of student life, we had no difficulty in finding the trees. But we became convinced that they were substantial evidences of more universal conditions and that we should seek to identify those conditions in order to come to grips with the whole issue of student life.

In this search, we developed four central themes which help to define the problem. These four themes — each focusing directly on the student in the University of Maine — seemed to us to provide one effective way to approach this complex issue. Those themes are:

*The Student* — The self-evident but often forgotten reality that the University exists for the student.

*The Student and the Faculty Member* — The essential relationship that lies at the heart of university life.

*The Student and Student Services* — The element in the university organization which must provide special services to the student.

*The Student and the State of Maine* — The unique environment of Maine which offers each student the potential for a rich learning experience.

The focus on the student which this Committee has undertaken is unique in the history of the University of Maine. It represents the first time the Trustees have examined the special place the student holds in the life of the University. Traditional approaches in the form of studies, commissions and special task forces have addressed such problems as student conduct codes, fee structure, copyright, sex discrimination and legal aid. There have been many studies of academic areas, curriculum and general operating procedures, but never of the principal inhabitant of the University community, the student. Such a study may seem rather late in coming, since the whole purpose of academic life is the student.

In the broadest interpretation, the faculty member, whose life of learning never ceases, is an integral part of this student life. That is why we place great emphasis in this Report on student-faculty relations, the quality of which sets the standard of the quality of University life. Student life is an academic affair. The end of learning does not come when the student leaves the classroom. The training, the directing, the counseling, the advising, the teaching — all involve the learning process which is shared by student and teacher alike. In a time when many of the out-of-classroom relationships
with students — also an important part of the learning process — have been taken over by professionals other than faculty members, it is perhaps appropriate to recall the ancient "apprentice-master" bond as a more creative model of the relationship between student and teacher than the "consumer-provider" model.

However, the complex community the student now lives in, also requires skilled administrative services which faculty should not provide, such as admissions, housing, medical care and financial aid. An important part of the student's life is in the hands of a student affairs staff which must be responsive to social needs that are often interrelated with the student's academic life. Thus there is a strong incentive for close collaboration between student affairs staff members and faculty members to benefit all students. But where the growing mind and turbulent spirit are aroused by the intellectual stimuli of academia, we believe that the teacher should be close at hand to advise and counsel. This belief greatly influences our recommendations regarding the division of services which bear upon student life and our insistence that the reward system for faculty members take the advisor role fully into consideration.

In addition to the division of services, the exact mix of services available to the student necessarily differs from campus to campus, college to college, department to department. This is why we also emphasize in this report the maintenance of campus autonomy. The students, faculty and administration of each campus must seek the formulae which serve them best, based on the high standards which motivate the whole University.

We feel that those high standards must be founded on an assumption that student life at the University of Maine is part of an educational process as vital and rigorous and promising as any in the Nation. Given the State's unique environment, anyone who aspires to live the student's life in Maine should feel that he/she is seeking the best. To achieve this goal, it must be acknowledged that we are pressing against an attitude, far too universal within the State, that Maine and the University of Maine are somehow "second best." Empirical data and objective analysis indicate that this is not the case, but these do not erase the nagging, prevalent sense of inferiority that can destroy the student's feeling that his/her attainments are important and that he/she is receiving the best education possible. We think this embarrassment should be faced openly with a firm determination to improve whatever is inferior in this University and to correct what misunderstanding is bred by a false sense of inferiority.

We have found that the process in which this Committee has been engaged during the past eight months has had a remarkably healthy effect in prompting the expression of positive ideas and giving voice to long-held misgiving regarding the quality of student life at the University's campuses. Our research and our very questioning of the faculty and student affairs officers on this subject, and particularly the Open Forums which brought in
a free movement of opinions, have shown us that there is great interest in “student life” in the University and an earnest desire to improve it and set it into its proper place in the structure.

Throughout this Report we will be making specific recommendations. As almost all of these recommendations lend themselves to resolution on each of the campuses rather than on a University-wide basis, and as each recommendation tends to require a continuing, long-term response rather than a prompt, one-shot solution, one general recommendation may have far-reaching and promising implications. The Committee found that the recently completed Open Forums on each campus initiated a process that raised issues for public view. The fact that these discussions were candid and without inhibition was a strengthening experience for student life within the University of Maine.

We recommend that Open Forums, with full and early notice, be held on each campus each spring. We further recommend that a member of the Board of Trustees act as Moderator at such Forums and that the rules of the Forum, in fact and in spirit, invite a full and fearless expression of views and opinions about student life from members of the University community. We request that the President of each campus, through the Chancellor, keep the Board informed about the time and place of such Open Forums. The Trustee who serves as Moderator shall provide a report of the results each year to the full Board of Trustees. The essential purpose of this recommendation is to provide additional channels of communication from the student to the Chancellor and the Trustees, without inhibition or interpretation in the process.
The Student

The University exists for the student.

If this simple truth were realized, many of the persistent problems encountered in student life would be resolved. The idea that the student is transient in a setting where all the other characters are permanent is misleading and irrelevant. The notion that the student is somehow in a subservient position and that schedules and campus arrangements must be imposed upon him at the convenience of professors and administrators is false. Yet such attitudes hinder student access to necessary services and amenities.

A principal concern of the student within the University is transferability of credits from campus to campus, college to college, and academic department to academic department. A corollary to that concern is the need, expressed by students, faculty and student affairs personnel, for improved clarity and regularity of all forms of communication. The necessity of strengthening communications within the University is illustrated by such diverse subjects as the student role in decision-making, student need for remedial studies, the prevalence of alcohol and drug use on campus, and the impact of residential life on the student. These topics are examples of issues which affect students on all campuses.

Transferability of Credits

A workable system of transferability of credits from one campus to another or from one college or department to another has been a major goal since the formation of the University in 1968. It held a prominent place with specific deadlines for action in the Green Book report, “Improving the University of Maine”, presented by the Trustees ad hoc Committee on Academic Planning in March of 1977. Yet it resists implementation. Many students still meet unnecessary difficulties in making changes in majors,
departments, colleges or campuses. Tales of disappointment, confusion and misunderstandings abound. It has become evident that many efforts to seek transfer are not recorded nor are they available for statistical purposes. The range of reasons offered for transfer requests and the spectrum of reasons given for denial pinpoint a general lack of communication. The existing policy on transfers is unfamiliar to many. For these reasons, it seems important to reaffirm the goal of achieving a system of transferability of credit.

Two issues seem central to the problem of transferability. First, students often complain that they are unsure whether coursework taken at one campus will meet specific degree requirements at another, and they say that they should know whether credits will be transferable before they sign up for a course. Second, students request that their final transcript from the campus from which they receive their degree should reflect all coursework taken within any of the University campuses, even though it may be reflected merely as elective credit rather than credit toward degree requirements. Both of these student concerns seem justified.

While it is important to facilitate the transfer of students, however, it is no less important to preserve the autonomy that allows each campus to establish its own academic standards and to shape a curriculum appropriate to the mission of that campus. A uniform curriculum throughout the system is neither possible nor desirable. Yet a modest degree or coordination, achieved not by fiat from above but by intra- and inter-campus cooperation at the department level, could substantially reduce the problems students now encounter in transferring.

One step in facilitating transfer of credits has been a suggested common course-numbering system. The Registrars of the University campuses have done considerable work on such a system. It has also been suggested that the University encourage and expand the practice of faculty from academic disciplines of the various campuses getting together on a regular basis to share ideas and thoughts, including the possibility of coordinating specific courses of study. This already has had salutary results in such disciplines as mathematics, history, biology, French, geography, and political science.

The phrase "common course numbering" might seem to imply a common catalog. But examples of telephone-book-size publications, typical of state university catalogs, seem of minimal value. Although it may be difficult, expensive, cumbersome, and ultimately unproductive to achieve a uniform course-numbering system throughout the entire University system, nevertheless it might be useful to seek at least a common system of numerical ranges, so that the designations "100-level," "200-level," and higher, would have the same meaning on all campuses. This would be advantageous to those students who are entering the University for the first time, it would assist the many students who engage in 2-plus-2 programs that exist between campuses, and it would clarify the difference between undergraduate and graduate level offerings.
A more radical proposal to facilitate transferability would be the establishment of a system-wide core curriculum consisting of, perhaps, ten or fifteen basic courses which are taken by a high proportion of our students. (Examples might be freshman English, introductory psychology, introductory sociology, introductory economics, U.S. history, introductory western civilization, introductory mathematics, introductory physics, introductory chemistry, introductory foreign language courses.)

If we could achieve through inter-campus conferences of the departments a system-wide consensus on course content and grading standards in a small group of core courses, it might then be possible to allow guaranteed, automatic transfer of credit in these courses. However, it is essential that the search for uniformity should not lead to a "leveling down" of academic standards, but rather a "leveling up" to meet the standards represented by the best programs in our University. If the core curriculum included at least ten courses, a student could take up to a full year of coursework at one campus, with a guarantee that this year of work would be fully transferable to any other campus in this University. At the same time, this system would recognize the rights of academic departments on the individual campuses to establish graduation requirements and academic standards within their major programs.

We recommend that the Chancellor and the Administrative Council immediately prepare a restatement of the policy of the University on access and transferability in clear and precise terms. We recommend the creation of innovative practices to expedite solutions to transfer: for example, the establishment of problems connected with a "Transfer Hotline" on each campus, i.e., a telephone number or office on each campus where a person is available to field questions on transfer promptly and effectively; the assignment of an executive officer from the Chancellor's Office to act as the "ombudsman" in the University to receive complaints and conflicts regarding issues of transfer and/or the development of a transfer telephone directory containing department level offices, staff names and phone numbers on each campus as an aid to all those seeking information on transfer. We further recommend that the Board create a Trustee Oversight Committee on Transferability to review annually the status of this University-wide problem on each campus.

Four Illustrations

The following illustrations of various problem areas in student life not only emphasize the problems themselves but also the need for strengthening communications throughout the University. A clear statement of purpose and need and a willingness to listen will help to resolve problems of this type.
Student Role in Decision-Making

No element of the University community can entertain doubts today about the appropriateness and legitimacy of student participation in the shaping of University life. Yet, despite many past attempts to bring the opinions of students more directly to bear upon decisions affecting University matters — through membership on Trustee committees, through student evaluation of faculty, through student participation in collective bargaining, through membership on search committees, and through the encouragement of a broad and active student government — there is often a feeling on the part of the student that he/she is not heard.

While the attitude that "we know what is good for you" lingers within certain bureaucratic operations on all of the campuses, the majority of University officials reject such a regressive view. The general assumption today is that students from 17 to 77 come to the University with a degree of intelligence and maturity which equips them to contribute to the decision-making process. However, it must not be assumed that all students have reached the level of maturity and ability necessary to deal with administrators on a sophisticated level. The University has a responsibility to work with students in helping them to use the decision-making process. The student must understand that the right to offer opinions does not guarantee their adoption. But student contribution to campus decisions must rank with other voices and receive reasonable and thoughtful attention.

The impact of student government, structured on a transient army of office-holders and voters, has always depended on many pressures within and outside the student body. In recent years, there has been a distressing lack of constituent participation by students, paralleling the disappointing degree of voter participation in the nation's political affairs. If student views are to affect decision-making in the University, it may be through campus administrative and academic channels, in addition to a student political structure. All approaches should be encouraged. It has been suggested that the student should have specific incentives, such as partial credit for holding office in student government.

No administrative or academic innovation of consequence should be contemplated without consideration of the students' role in making such a decision.

We recommend that the highest ranking officials responsible for academic affairs and student affairs on each campus meet regularly with a representative group of students, including some members of student government organizations and some from outside student government, to insure that both the letter and spirit of Trustee policy on student participation in decision-making are being properly pursued. The Board of Trustees should receive through the Chancellor, a report on student participation in decision-making from each President by March 1981, and the same date each year thereafter.
Student Need for Remedial Study

Many students who enter the University are well-prepared for their academic work through their maturity and intelligence but may not have had the specific work they need to prepare them for certain courses. Therefore, there is a need for remedial study which will bring such potential student talent up to the appropriate level for further progress. In some instances, students did not have a wholly successful high school experience; or some may have particular gaps in the basic disciplines. In other instances, students have been away from studies for so long they need refresher courses and short-term tutorials. Clearly, high schools should in general be responsible for such preparation, but in certain situations — long time lags between completion of high school and entrance into the University, unwillingness of students to return to high school, uneven quality of secondary education — remedial work becomes a responsibility of the University. Remediation, however, should not be regarded as college level work; its purpose is to prepare the student for such work.

We recommend that each campus recognize that some students seeking admission are qualified except for minor deficiencies which can be remedied by specific courses of study which the campus can supply. The campus should provide such services at reasonable cost to the student. Such remedial study should not qualify for credit as college-level work.

It is an obligation of the University to collaborate with the school districts in Maine in offering courses and workshops for teacher preparation and in developing new materials and instructional ideas, in order to assist local communities in improving basic skills development.

We recommend that by 1988 — i.e., within the next two high school generations — the great preponderance of remedial work should be offered by the local high school districts. The Dean of the University College of Education should provide the leadership for this university-school district liaison in cooperation with the State Department of Educational and Cultural Services. The University Dean, through the Chancellor, should provide the Board of Trustees with a progress report on this project each spring, beginning in 1981.

Prevalence of Alcohol and Drug Abuse

There is no question of the existence of drug use on the campuses of the University, including alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs. All are considered a serious problem. The overuse and abuse of alcohol and, to a lesser extent, other drugs, by students, faculty and other members of the University community needs positive attention. It is clear that student life for the abusers as well as for everyone else on campus has been impaired by excessive drinking and the subsequent traumae. The campuses recognize that responding to this problem is not solely a student responsibility. A continuing education-action program for students, faculty and staff should be maintained on each campus.
We recommend that substance abuse education programs focusing on prevention be initiated by each campus for the entire campus community. The President of each campus should report through the Chancellor on its plan to combat abuse by November 1, 1980.

Impact of Residential Life on Student

Residential life is an important facet of the University experience. The quality of dormitory life has a direct correlation to academic success. The operation and administration of residence halls varies from campus to campus and even within a single campus. Conditions in dormitories have been described as less than ideal. This is a perennial problem, but it is time for determined action on it. It is not unusual to find dormitories reflecting the general exuberance of students. As places of residence, the students' rooms would be expected to mirror the range of living conditions and arrangements one expects in any situation where large numbers of disparate people gather. But it is imperative that dormitory life be as conducive as possible to the achievement of the educational goals of the University.

The most common problem is the need to balance individual rights with the needs of the majority. In this case, the entire population involved consists of students — students who are affecting each other by their conduct. Therefore, it seems imperative that the issues involved be resolved through an exercise in self-determination. Where conditions are caused by students and affect students, it is the students themselves who should determine which steps are most appropriate to allay specific concerns.

Residential life personnel need to be involved earlier and be more creative in their efforts to respond to the varied and emerging life styles preferred by students. Greater initiative needs to be exercised in order to anticipate newly admitted students' needs before they arrive on campus to permit staff to make appropriate long-range plans and develop focused programs for residential students.

In addition to on-campus residents, there are many students — the majority on some campuses — who desire housing for themselves and, in some cases, for their families near the campus for a semester or for several years, to pursue their studies conveniently. They look to the University for help in securing decent housing. Should the University serve as a "consumer advocate" for off-campus students to aid in seeking and arranging for housing? This Committee believes it should. An extension of the duties of the campus housing service should be the examination and certification of nearby housing for off-campus students. The service should include the keeping of a directory of available housing and a referral system that serves both the student and the prospective landlord. Among other benefits, such a system would encourage fair rentals and adequate living conditions.
We recommend that the President of each campus examine the feasibility of more faculty-in-residence opportunities on campus. In addition, we recommend a specific review to determine what steps might make dormitory life more liveable, with strong emphasis on involving residential students themselves in determining ways of improving residence hall life. Finally, the campus administration should assure that an appropriate off-campus housing service is available to students. Each President should submit a report, through the Chancellor, to the Board of Trustees on all three recommendations by December 1, 1980.
Student-Faculty Relationship

The student-faculty relationship is unassailable.

We believe that such a relationship represents the truest definition of collegial spirit and that to be successful it must be built upon a mutual understanding of the roles of teacher and student and a shared commitment to the goals of the University. The transfer of wisdom implicit in the teacher-student relationship is the core of the educational process, and the University should seek to create opportunities for such transfer both in and out of the classroom.

The academic curriculum is a principal means through which this transfer takes place. In the area of curriculum students have always voted with their feet, by electing to take certain courses and refusing to take others. Inevitably, students will continue to influence the curriculum by this means. Otherwise, however, the Committee detected no widespread desire on the part of the students to exercise greater control over the contents of the curriculum; by and large, students recognize that decisions as to what is taught and when and how are decisions that must be made by the faculty. However, the Committee did discover two important areas of legitimate student concern in the area of faculty-student relations: the quality of faculty advising, and the availability of information about faculty members.

Faculty Advising of Students

The importance of the faculty member's role as advisor to the student is emphasized by the fact that the contract approved by the faculty union and the University states that student advising is a criterion for the evaluation of faculty members. The University faculty's obligation to provide competent, sympathetic and informed academic advising to its students is no less significant a part of the faculty's responsibility than are its obligations in the
classroom, in the laboratory or the research library, and in the public service area. It is agreed by all in the University community that student advising is one of the essential criteria in evaluating the faculty's professional activity. Academic advising can be an arduous and time-consuming process and a faculty member's competence in this area should be weighed along with his proficiency as a teacher. Just as faculty members are evaluated regularly by students, they should be evaluated by advisees. We believe that sound academic advising is a critical ingredient in the life of the student and that it merits serious consideration when faculty members are being considered for promotion or tenure, as appropriate on each campus.

In the tradition of higher education, faculty performance is judged on the criteria of teaching, research and public service. The system of rewards, including promotion and tenure, is based upon a combination of excellence in these three areas. We believe it is an appropriate time to consider a fourth standard and that is the contribution of faculty to student life. We fully recognize that the idea of adding a new criterion to professional evaluation needs careful examination and thorough scrutiny to assure fair practices. Our concern goes beyond the important advising function and encompasses a broad range of interchange in and out of the classroom experience. The Committee recognizes that there is no substitute for scholarship in evaluating faculty for promotion and tenure; but the Committee also believes that the performance of a superlative advisor who deeply involves him/herself in the lives of his/her students should receive proper recognition.

It is important to point out that academic advising is taken as a serious commitment by most faculty and that many students feel well-served and intelligently assisted by the present advising system. At the same time, students voiced sincere concern for the general unevenness of the faculty advising role. Some students complained that new faculty members lack knowledge of the campus; others mentioned senior faculty members who express little interest in the advising function. There does not seem to be any single solution to these problems. In units with high student/faculty ratios and a rapid turnover of faculty, students are more likely to turn to one another for advice than to seek out a faculty advisor who may be swamped with students or who often has little knowledge of the University.

We received complaints from students who had no advisors at all, who had great difficulty locating their advisors or who, once they found their advisors, ended up advising their advisors on University affairs. Despite the satisfaction of many students with current advising practices, we feel deficiencies exist and should be addressed promptly.

In the area of requirements and options, students have a right to accurate information from academic advisors. The development by each campus of an annual advisor's handbook covering the programs offered at the campus may do as much as anything to insure the accuracy of the information given out by advisors.
No system will insure that the student will always receive the best advice. The quality of academic advice available to students is comparable to other kinds of advice available in our society; for example, legal, medical, or tax advice. Given the reality of University advising, it seems that sometime during the orientation period, it may be wise to introduce to all students the notion that the nature of academic advising is implied by the term “advisor.” It is advice that is given, and academic advice should be evaluated in the same way that advice in any other area of one’s life is evaluated. Ultimately, the responsibility for one’s academic life (student life for that matter) rests where it does with life in general, and that is with the person doing the living. In short, one accepts or rejects all advice at one’s own risk. In this respect, it is incumbent upon the advisor to keep careful written records.

We feel that each campus has examples of conditions which encourage better relations between faculty and student. In some instances, funds could be made available to encourage advisors and advisees to meet outside of the academic setting. We feel that no faculty member should be assigned advisees until he/she has been on the campus for at least a year to become familiar with programs on the campus, nor should an advisor be assigned so many students as to diminish effectiveness. Competence in academic advising is an important asset. Each campus needs to develop specific programs and aids for those faculty who wish to help in developing their abilities as advisors.

We are impressed with the unusual significance of the faculty/student relationship in University life and its potential impact upon the student and University community.

We recommend that the Board of Trustees create a special commission of faculty and administrators to study the general contribution the faculty member makes to student life and to the student experience at the University. The roles of the faculty member as advisor, as well as teacher, researcher and public servant, should be studied, as well as assessments of the rewards available for outstanding performance in all these roles.

We recommend further that the President at each campus immediately assess the roles of faculty and students as advisors and advisees and take whatever steps are appropriate to remedy obvious deficiencies and encourage a hospitable climate for this important relationship to grow. Each President should report, through the Chancellor, to the Board of Trustees his findings and his actions by October 1, 1980.
Student Evaluations of Faculty

The faculty contract declares that "The Parties agree that student input is essential in the improvement of instruction" and that "student input is a meaningful part of evaluation."* Student evaluations can perform three important functions. They can help faculty become more effective teachers; they can help administration to recognize and reward good teaching and correct ineffective teaching; they can help students find their way to those teachers who have most to offer them. But no single evaluation instrument can perform all of these functions at the same time. Theoretically, current student evaluations are designed to help the teacher improve his/her own performance, and to help colleagues and administration assess that teacher's performance. In fact, the standard computerized evaluation form currently in use on some campuses does not perform either of these functions adequately. Few, if any, of the questions help the teacher understand which of his/her pedagogical methods succeeded and which did not. At the same time, the questions are so bland that virtually all teachers fall within the same statistical range — roughly "B+" to "B−." By the same token, the information elicited by these questionnaires would, if publicly released, offer the individual student little if any help in learning which members of the faculty have the most to offer him or her. Each of the three parties here at issue (the faculty member, the administration, and the student) should develop an independent method for gathering information on faculty performance. The individual faculty member should elicit "feed back" from his/her students, but this information should truly be for the faculty member alone.

The administration should develop its own methods of assessing faculty performance. There are many examples present in higher education, but each campus might utilize such standard procedures as enrollment figures, interviews, questionnaires, or exit interviews with graduating seniors. ("Which of the courses that you took here seemed to you most worthwhile, and why? Which of your courses seem useless to you at this point, and why?")

Finally, students need their own systems of disseminating information about faculty. A good deal of such information gets communicated through the "grapevine," but the information communicated by this means is often distorted and inadequate. Currently there is a good deal of official resistance to the establishment of more systematic methods of disseminating student viewpoints on the faculty. This resistance would disappear if all parties involved would recognize that the real issue is not "rating" Prof. X as "good," "bad," or in between, but rather making available to students useful information about what kind of teacher Prof. X is. One solution might be an annual "Faculty Guide," prepared by student governments on each campus.

Students are often inhibited by constraints on their evaluations. Many students believe that, to be placed in the record, a student evaluation must be signed by the student. Yet the student cannot see that record and fears that his/her evaluation might never have gotten there. A clear understanding by both student and faculty member of the function of official student evaluations, as specified in the University-AFUM contract, is advisable.

We recommend that the Presidents make clear that access to official student evaluations of faculty members is limited to the faculty member, colleagues and administrative superiors, as appropriate, and does not constitute information to be made available to students. In return, faculty members should be fully informed of the rules which guide the student evaluations. The chief academic officer should report to the President by October 1, 1980, that this clarification has been made. The Presidents should immediately share the information with the Chancellor.

Since they wish information about professors and courses, we encourage students to develop some form of guide or handbook through their own resources, such as their student government.

We encourage the campus administration to use information, such as enrollment figures, advisees evaluations, and exit interviews, to assess faculty performance, and to assure that such information be placed in the faculty member's personnel file.
The Student and Student Services

Student life depends on an effective student affairs staff.

As much as we believe that "student life is an academic affair," this Committee also recognizes that there is a wide range of day-to-day student concerns which create a student-administrator relationship alongside the student-faculty relationship. From admission to graduation, expert guides are necessary to make the student’s presence in the institution as productive as possible.

Throughout the University of Maine campuses, the student affairs staff has built up an enviable record of effective concern for the welfare of the student. Nevertheless, it is perhaps inevitable that when student dissatisfaction is expressed, even on matters involving the curriculum, it is the student affairs staff which usually receives the criticism.

The mutual interest in the student of the student affairs staff and the faculty pervades student life. Faculty concern for the intellectual development of the student must perforce involve personal development. The management concerns of the student affairs staff must take into consideration the curriculum and classroom life. This area of overlapping concerns means that at times faculty and student affairs staff compete for the student's attention and for the campus resources available to respond to the student’s needs. This situation can either polarize student affairs-faculty relations or stimulate imaginative collaboration for the student's benefit.

In the delicate area of counseling, where a faculty member's advice may encounter counseling services which student affairs offices already provide, it seems important to develop new lines of communication between faculty and
student affairs staff to insure that the best qualified persons are readily available to those who need particular kind of counseling.

As another example, in addressing the major problem of student drop-out, a topic which often defies rational analysis, a closer bond between faculty and student affairs staff may provide more timely identification of the particular factors that cause the high rate of loss, whether they be due to social conditions, academic difficulties, finances or some combination of these. Early warning and cooperative efforts may aid the individual student in the decision to stay or leave. On each campus, we feel that a spirit of shared concern by faculty members and student affairs staff, who can combine the University resources which they command for the greater welfare of the student, would create a campus environment most suited to the intellectual and personal development of the student.

There is a prevalent lack of communication at all levels of University life, including communication between faculty and student affairs officers. This seems puzzling in an environment populated by knowledgeable and articulate people. Nevertheless, we found that sometimes both the simple and complex problems which the students, the faculty and the administration on each campus and throughout the University encountered defied resolution merely because the parties attacking the problems did not understand each other and were often intolerant of other views in the rush to defend their own. The recurrence of major issues, such as transferability of credits, and the discovery that repeated proposals to resolve these issues had resulted in little significant change, seemed to indicate that at times faculty or staff groups within the University are insufficiently responsive to the legitimate needs of students.

In this context, we feel that the influence of both student affairs officers and faculty members upon the student would be most productive in an atmosphere of maximum mutual respect for and understanding of each other’s role.

The need for clear understanding of University policies and procedures begins with the policy of admissions. Men and women of many backgrounds, motivated by a variety of desires, seek access to the University campuses and programs. We believe that everyone who is sufficiently motivated should be encouraged to take courses at the University, to pursue degrees when possible. At the same time, the campus must insist on standards for all of their programs which will make them worth entering. The degree to which all courses at the University are available must be monitored to ensure the most hospitable reception for aspiring students.

In terms of its student population, the University of Maine is in a period of profound, seemingly prolonged, transition. It has always been hazardous to stereotype the “student” and it is more than ever impossible to do so now. An examination of the 1979 enrollment data, for example, reveals population highlights which suggest some of the difficulties in preparing cur-
riculum and student-life plans. Of all University students, for example, 19,648 (70 percent) live off campus. At the Farmington campus, 72 percent of the students are women; at UMO 54 percent are men. The over-all balance is 54 percent women and 46 percent men. Out-of-state students range from 19 percent at Orono to 5 percent at USM.

It seems certain that the student population configuration will change significantly from year to year in the foreseeable future. There are many student-life issues which are changing with the statistics and these have been noted and considered by this Committee. Parking, transportation, day care centers, athletics are some of the many issues on each campus which have varying degrees of importance and which will require careful monitoring and sound long-range planning. Because we have not discussed each of these issues in detail in this Report, we do not mean to imply that we regard them as insignificant. The trends should be tracked and needs anticipated to the greatest degree possible.

There must be consistency in the delivery of the services which display respect for the student as an intelligent person, and which makes it clear that the student is expected to show the same maturity and respect in his day-to-day life on campus. This Committee feels that full student participation in these affairs will better assure proper behavior on the part of the student, whether it be dormitory living or career preparation, receipt of health services or of financial aid.

There are some areas of specific concern to student affairs offices which bear further discussion. These areas are:

**Financial Aid**

The Committee found inconsistencies among the campuses in the administration of financial aid programs. Some campuses had "too much money" and other had insufficient funds to distribute. Attitudes toward financial aid were unsatisfactory at some of the campuses on both the awarding and the receiving ends. We feel that it is appropriate to remind financial aid officers that they should respect the dignity of persons who receive aid and to caution students that they not abuse the privilege of receiving financial aid.

**Career Placement**

Advice to the student on his/her career choices is a typical example of the frequent need for professional counseling beyond that provided by the faculty member. While asserting that the University is primarily an institution of higher learning and that its concerns, consequently, differ from those of a vocational school, the Committee acknowledges the fact that, as a practical matter, students expect their education to lead to employment opportunities after college. In short, it is the legitimate responsibility of the various campuses to help their graduates find jobs when possible. At pres-
ent, some of the campuses expend considerable effort in this direction while others do not. In the latter cases, campuses should be called upon to reallocate their resources to provide better career counseling. The University must not short-change its students in this area.

Specifically, each campus should employ the services of knowledgeable personnel who can reinforce the faculty in providing students with accurate, up-to-date, and practical information regarding career opportunities after graduation. The University should take the lead in encouraging prospective employers to send representatives to campuses for student interviews. The University is not a job placement service. But to ignore the desire of its students to find work would be to fail to provide students with a legitimate and useful way to complete their education.

**Student Health**

Each campus has its own system of delivery of health care to students, ranging from minimal essential services to a fully staffed infirmary. We have found that, in all cases, campuses are meeting their responsibility. We feel the emphasis on health counseling should be on prevention, stressing such subjects, for example, as improved nutrition, the dangers of smoking and good mental health practice. There is a salutary emphasis on preventive medical education in the regular programming on health topics by MPBN. Professional counseling services, which go beyond the advice normally provided by faculty members, are available to students. Both types of counseling are directed toward good mental health on the part of the students.

**Student Unions**

Not all campuses possess a student union or similar center of student out-of-classroom activity. The Committee feels that a designated student gathering place should be available on each campus. These facilities serve an important role in providing students a place to meet and interact with faculty, staff and other students and they should endeavor to provide a wide range of service and recreational opportunities. Student control and management of policy and programs of such centers should be maintained.

**Libraries**

It is difficult to imagine a student service as significant as the resources of the University's libraries. Organized for the pursuit of excellence, the individual campus collections are the anchor for the major activities of academic life and the library service to and for students is one that has received much praise and strong support. At the same time, the students have urged that the availability of the library service should extend to weekends and later daily closings. Too often the decision-making process on the campus has excluded students from participation in deciding such questions as library staffing, new acquisitions, hours, and security. Students
need an “honest place” to spend their time for study and research. Active efforts are needed to assure a sharper responsiveness to student requests for library services.

**Minorities**

There are many categories of students which attract special attention. They are often referred to as “minorities.” They each have characteristics which require specific attention, often because of past neglect. In at least one instance, women, they are in the majority.

The female in the university society faces problems similar to the woman in American society at large. Although women now constitute 54 percent of the student population, opportunities for women, as compared with men, in such areas as career choice and athletics are often inferior to those for men. While there is great awareness of this issue throughout the University, we believe it is worthy of note in this Report.

Other areas where positive, conscious actions would improve self-perception in studies as well as staff, and where there is still room for improvement, include further development of programs for the handicapped, Native Americans, blacks, and foreign students — all part of the tremendous movement in the population mix. Each group deserves a continuing sensitivity to its needs. While the University certainly has been responsive to the past damage caused by stereotyping that has adversely affected such groups, even greater sensitivity in the future has been suggested. This Committee believes that such a reminder is justified.

*We recommend that the campus administrations develop a complete consciousness of the need for more reliable communications, particularly among the faculty, the students affairs personnel, and students. We urge campuses to recognize the potential value in student affairs-faculty collaboration in serving the students. We recommend that each President assign a formal facilitator to bring about greater collaboration. The facilitators should provide an annual status report through their Presidents to the Chancellor.*
The Student and the State of Maine

The larger environment surrounding the student and the prevailing attitudes regarding that environment have much to do with the quality of student life. There is a special character in Maine's environment which can be a source of pride and strength. This special character can be found in Maine's great size and its diverse geographic make-up. There is a diversity also in the people of Maine. They come from large cities and remote woods and coast. They sometimes speak differently from other Americans. They have a reputation for stiff independence. They are usually highly intelligent but sometimes prefer to lean on their own devices rather than go to college. Maine is at the end of the communications line and things sometimes get here late and cost more. Maine is also so compellingly beautiful, so alluring and attractive, that, despite a large exodus of young men and women, each year its population has grown with an unprecedented influx of new residents, greatly augmented each summer by visitors.

The University has not communicated this special character of Maine life to its students and faculty. There seems to be something lacking in University programs, in student-life attitudes, in policies, discussions, and the curriculum. Instead, there is transmitted what has been termed "a psychology of second-rate-ism" with regard to Maine. This pervasive sense of unworthiness is shared not only by many members of the University community but by residents of Maine at large. It is a demoralizing and poisonous attitude which disguises achievements and discourages ambition. The fact that it is largely inaccurate and unfair does not diminish its destructive effect on attitudes toward the State and the University, both among students and in the public at large.
The faculty does not deserve the comment made by a former academic vice president: “Anybody who is any good has already left!” Yet it must come to grips with such an attitude because it is prevalent enough to diminish the self-esteem of being part of the University and its student life.

Among the specific actions that can be taken to combat this elusive shadow are efforts to recognize and appreciate cultural and physical differences where they exist. Let us regard these differences as unique resources to be enjoyed rather than as encumbrances to excellence. The University, by becoming truly representative of Maine, can be of great service to the State. There is opportunity as well as need for positive, conscious actions to improve self-perception in students as well as staff.

It is interesting to note the disbelief or lack of acceptance of existing excellence within the University. The “grass is greener” syndrome persists and the second-rate attitude is reinforced when members of the University community find it awkward and embarrassing to praise that which is good and reward that which is superior.

We recommend a more aggressive program that calls attention to the University’s assets. It does, for example, have one of the finest small Law Schools in the nation. It does have a Quaternary Institute marked for its innovative, creative activities. It has made great strides in such programmatic areas as forestry, school health and community health education, chemical engineering, environmental science, philosophy, recreation and leisure, Canadian-American Studies, bio-technical studies, English, public administration, performing arts, special education and agricultural engineering. On every campus there are academic programs which have achieved or are approaching excellence. We need to recognize and even boast about these strengths.
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