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THE INNOVATOR

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

VOLUME II
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NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Chicago, Illinois 60625

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1975

. . . That there is a clientele available in most areas of the country for these (external-degree) programs now seems fairly evident. Whether other universities in the United States will respond with the same degree of concern and dedication that New York State has demonstrated still remains to be seen. However, two factors are moving universities in that direction: (1) the external degree program is less expensive since it does not require the kind of capital construction costs that are associated with internal degree programs, and (2) universities nationwide, faced with declining enrollments, are looking for new markets to attract. The external degree market seems to be a likely one for this purpose.

Edward C. Moore

"Some Forms of Nontraditional
Higher Education," North Central
Association Quarterly (49:3; Winter,
1975), 317.

New York State, under the enlightened guidance of Education Commissioner Ewald Nyquist and SUNY Chancellor Ernest Boyer, has developed two external degree programs, the Regents External Degree and Empire State College. The former - a "pure" external program on the University of London model - requires only that students demonstrate degree competencies through a series of standard examinations. The latter is a state-wide program of individualized study, often independent, which greatly parallels the University Without Walls.

Although the State of Illinois has not yet adopted statewide nontraditional programs of this type, Northeastern Illinois University does have two such programs. The November 1974 issue of the Innovator dealt with our University Without Walls unit, one of less than three dozen throughout the country. The present issue, then, is devoted entirely to our Board of Governors B.A. Degree Program (BOG/BA), which is our approximation - with significant differences - of the Regents program in New York.

For one thing, whereas the Regents program is available throughout the country, the BOG/BA is limited to students in the five Board of Governors schools - Eastern Illinois University, Western Illinois University, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago State University, and Governors State University. Secondly, BOG/BA includes portfolio assessment of prior college-equivalent learning (vs. standardized examinations in the Regents program); a minimal residency requirement of fifteen semester hours at a BOG institution (vs. no residency requirement in the New York program); and the use of traditional coursework. In short, our BOG/BA is a kind of hybrid or modified external-degree program which makes a somewhat traditional program of studies

available to fully employed adults.

As the following articles make clear, the program is not without its problems. (What traditional program is!) However, as Chancellor Moore suggests above, the need for just such programs is being felt, and to judge by Northeastern Illinois' experience thus far - the students are flocking in.

I therefore hope that this issue of the Innovator will give in-house readers a better idea of the BOG/BA program as well as put the concept on the intellectual map for those of you who are off-campus. If you have any comments or questions, please feel free, as always, to write. In this case you may wish to address your concerns directly to: Mr. C. Edward Gilpatric, BOG/BA Coordinator, or Ms. Hadith Edelman, Assistant Coordinator.

Meanwhile, happy spring - the traditional season of re-newal.

Reynold Feldman
Director of Program Development
Editor

* * *

INTRODUCTION

With the BOG/BA Program in its third year at Northeastern, and still enjoying rapid growth, the time seems ripe for self-evaluation. We have plans for improving procedures, providing peer-group support, and validating standards. The BOG Advisory Committee has recently been organized under the chairmanship of Dr. Iva Carruthers, and a committee has been formed for review of credit awards for college-equivalent experience. We also hope for increased faculty input as a result of the distribution of information packets on campus. Finally, if budget and space allow, we will add a half-time counselor to our staff next fiscal year, a part of whose job will be to initiate group meetings for students to exchange views and discuss mutual concerns. Meantime, Ms. Rose Levinson of the Women's Studies Program will hold a planning session for all BOG/BA women in preparation for group meetings on the problems of women returning to school and other issues.

Our "active" enrollment as of February 1, 1975, was 650 (we consider students active when they are either registered for courses or in process of assessment). Among these are about twenty policemen, forty-five registered nurses (of whom twenty are school nurses), and fifteen teacher-aides. Fifty-five of the women in the program are over fifty years of age, a group we are intently interested in bringing together.

As of February, 1975, four hundred and ten life experience assessments had been completed by sixty faculty members (16% of full-time faculty) and twenty off-campus evaluators.

A survey of BOG/BA graduates yielded results to be found on the next two pages.

We have difficulties resulting from growth, our small staff, and occasional misinformation among colleagues. But these problems, as well as the satisfaction of helping our students achieve their goals, keep the program exciting for us. Yes, we have no stagnation!

Hadith Edelman
Assistant Coordinator

GRADUATE SURVEY

Of one hundred graduates including those of August, 1974, sixty-two have replied to our questionnaire. The following is a summary of the responses.

1. Have you been admitted to a graduate or professional school?

Of the thirty-three who answered "yes," seventeen were attending Northeastern's Graduate College. The other sixteen were attending the following institutions:

Cambridge Goddard Graduate School for Social Change
De Paul University Graduate School of Business
De Paul University Law School
De Paul University School of Education (2)
George Williams College
Illinois Institute of Technology
John Marshall Law School
Loyola Graduate School of Theology
Northern Illinois University
Roosevelt University
Rush University College of Nursing
University of Arizona
University of Florida Law School
University of Illinois, Circle Campus - Criminal Justice
University of Illinois College of Medicine.

2. Have you been refused admittance to a graduate or professional school?

Five replied that they had been refused for the following reasons:

Grade point average (George Williams University, Illinois Institute of Technology, John Marshall Law School);
Insufficient experience in field of application (University of Illinois);
No major (University of Southern California).

3. Has your job status been affected by your earning the BOG/BA degree?

Twenty said "yes," as follows:

Pay Raise:	9	New Job:	4
Promotion:	6	Job Retention:	1

4. We also asked for place of employment. Some graduates are self-employed, some unemployed (for instance, housewives); some chose not to respond to this question. Seven are employed by local school districts as teachers in elementary and high schools. Six teach in local colleges and universities. One is chief of police in a suburban township. Several work for the State of Illinois in various capacities.

5. Has the special nature of the BOG/BA degree proved an asset or a liability? (Selected comments)

* It has definitely been an asset - both monetarily and in the esteem of fellow workers, as well as self-concept, etc. As a school nurse for eight years, I now feel fully qualified to do the health teaching and counseling, which I did prior to graduating, but with many trepidations.

* It was a tremendous breakthrough in my life, and I will truly be forever grateful for it. Had it not been for this program or something like it, I may never have gotten my bachelor's degree and, hence, would not have been eligible for law school. Furthermore, as part of my work towards the degree, I was able to make great strides on a book I had been only planning up to that point. Now, I am nearly finished with the research on the book and have presented it to a publisher.

* I would say the most significant asset was in my personal self-image. It also inspires me to encourage adults in middle and late years of life not to stagnate or regress.

* Clearly an asset. The job that I presently have is rewarding both mentally, physically, and income-wise. Thus, my peers view me simply as a UNI graduate.

* Both. Some (most) job interviewers where this was discussed indicated it did not matter, one was somewhat negative, and in a few specific instances it was considered an asset (such as supervisory position job interview). Overall, I have found it to be an acceptable degree. In applying to grad schools (and in discussion with advisors of grad schools where application was not made) I was informed that it was a "perfectly good degree and fully acceptable" (George Williams). Jane Addams School of Social Work has accepted my application.

* To date the BOG degree has not been refused; however, De Paul is a bit wary and today wrote that I have been accepted into the School of Education in the form of an experiment.

* * *

THOUGHTS OF TWO BOG ADVISORS

I have had the rather unique opportunity not only to serve as an advisor to BOG students, but also to have been involved in the development and implementation of BOG/BA at Northeastern. Through my involvement with the Center for Program Development (Dr. Vogel has been chairman of the university-wide Advisory Committee on Program Development for several years. - Ed.), I was able to be intimately involved with the Coordinator and the Advisory Committee for BOG as well as work with Board of Governors personnel who helped to develop the concept.

From the beginning, I felt the concept had potential, particularly on an urban campus. However, I was also convinced from early on that there would be an on-going struggle to maintain a proper balance between the needs of the students on the one hand and the rigor of a university program on the other. From the student's view the need was for a very flexible program that could consider a whole variety of life experiences and evaluate them in some reasonable and equitable manner. From the university's view the need was to maintain the necessary rigor for any university-level program and also to insure, for the student's sake as well as the university's, that the program did not get a reputation as a "rip-off" so that students with BOG degrees would not be handicapped after leaving Northeastern.

Further, I supported the "competence-based" aspects of the program because the focus was not on whether or not a student might, in the case of education, be a successful teacher, but on the student's demonstrated competence in a teaching situation. The key, of course, was the documentation of the level of competence and whether the student had indeed had adequate time to demonstrate the competence.

These concerns moved from the philosophical to the real when I was asked to serve as a BOG advisor. No longer could I think about what might be or should be. Now I had to look at real-life experiences and make some hard decisions.

As might be expected, I came down hard on the side of conservatism! Anyone who had taught for fifteen years under close supervision of five independent supervisors, three of whom had had post-doctoral study, had no problems with me! Over time, fortunately, I have mellowed a bit (only ten years of teaching and two post-doctoral supervisors!). Seriously, as I have had the opportunity to work with more students and, perhaps most importantly for me, to actually observe some of the BOG students, I am greatly impressed with their dedication and determination. Of course, we occasionally meet a student who wants credit simply for having lived. However, as the BOG "Guide to Life Experience Assessment" points out so succinctly, "One thing we are not attempting to do ... is to issue a certificate of life competence.... Mere years of experience are not a reliable indicator of learning...."

In conclusion, let me say that I feel not only that the program is a sound one and the vast majority of students very competent, but also that my work with the program has helped me in my work with non-BOG students. The comparisons have aided me in re-evaluating my expectations and requirements. Thus, the experience has been a profitable two-way street.

Frank Vogel
Professor of Elementary Education

What one knows is more important than where one learns. This important aspect of the BOG/BA Program makes the work of a faculty evaluator particularly challenging. A faculty member is asked to evaluate a student's life/job experiences in order to determine how many college credit hours a set of experiences is worth. A student who has worked at organizing parents in a local community to make certain institutions respond to local needs may learn a lot more from such an experience than from a class in community organizations.

While the faculty evaluator is asked to determine and assign a certain amount of college credit for a given set of life/job experiences, the program has yet to develop guidelines which will adequately help a student produce a quality document which clearly delineates his/her experiences.*

As a result of the present lack, a faculty member may receive a very comprehensive document which provides more than enough information on which to pass judgment regarding college credit. The opposite, however, turns out to be the rule. A lot of students do not provide enough information, or the materials are not organized in a way to allow for an adequate evaluation. One may wind up rewarding the student with the verbal skills to produce a slick document rather than the person with genuine (but poorly documented) competencies.

In order not simply to reward verbal skills, I find it necessary to read the student's descriptions, confer with the student, and then call two or three people (usually supervisors or colleagues listed in the document as references) about the student's performance in a life/job experience. This I do in order to further understand the

* More specific guidelines now exist in draft. - BOG/BA staff

extent of the student's experiences. At this point, if the student's own description seems to "sell him/her short," I request a revision. (One has to bear in mind that the student description of life/job experience remains part of the official record to document the bases on which college credit was awarded.) Only then do I assign college credit hours.

To illustrate this procedure, let me describe the experience of a student who worked with inner-city youth as a program coordinator, a person who knew the ins and outs of fund raising for a scholarship program and who had learned much about the world of publishing as assistant to a vice-president of one of the most important publishing houses in the Midwest. After I met with her, she agreed to record her experiences in greater detail. I then called an individual acquainted with her in each separate life/job experience: an associate at the fund-raising endeavor, a colleague in the youth program, and her supervisor in the publishing house. They said things about the student which she was too modest to write, and, in effect, made me appreciate her experiences much more than if I had accepted the sketchy description she gave initially.

The BOG program is in essence a very important part of our attempt to make Northeastern a viable, innovative urban institution. Until we develop a set of guidelines for students in their efforts to describe their life/job experiences, however, the above strategies might prove useful for other faculty evaluators as well.

Samuel Betances
Professor of Sociology

* * *

A GRADUATE VIEWS THE PROGRAM

(Nancy Foerster was awarded credits in Special Education and Elementary Education.)

This article will explain my experiences in being evaluated for credit in the BOG/BA Program. This really wasn't quite the chore it could have been because I had been employed as a professional teacher for four years prior to my admittance to the program. I had had two years of college, and I needed life experience credits equal to two years of college work.

The way I went about writing up my life experiences consisted in reading Northeastern's catalog of classes and pulling out those that were similar to my experiences. Then I approached the faculty members in the fields I felt paralleled my experiences and asked if they fulfilled the course requirements. Because I was one of the first ten graduates of the BOG/BA Program at Northeastern, some instructors were very reluctant to recommend credit without knowing more about the program. So in a lot of cases, I ended up explaining the program to the faculty.

On the other hand, many instructors were quite generous with their time and counsel. Their advice led me to explore needed areas to fulfill the requirements for the degree. My goal was a bachelor of arts so that I could continue my teaching career in Chicago.

One example of what I did was to go to the supervisor of student teaching and ask if I could receive credit for six hours of student teaching because I had four years of teaching in certified schools in southern Indiana. The supervisor had personal interviews with me during which time he evaluated me and my teaching experience. He asked questions about my procedures, techniques, lesson plans, etc. Also, I was required to get letters about my proficiency, dedication, and responsibilities from all my former employers in the areas in which I sought credit.

The greatest help to me in getting my life experience evaluated was the kind and understanding help from the Program Coordinator. He was always ready to help out in a problem situation, especially if any difficulty arose in contacting faculty. He was always willing to listen to any problems in areas regarding the program, and tried to do his best to solve them. His enthusiasm and encouragement were a great help in getting me through the program successfully.

The assets in having my experiences evaluated and going through the BOG/BA Program are many. The greatest was knowing what I wanted and being willing to let the program help me. The instructors I contacted led me to explore unfamiliar areas in teaching, to help me be the best teacher I could be when I graduated and returned to teaching.

I graduated in August, 1973, and had a job waiting in December of 1973. The best part of the BOG/BA Program was allowing me, as a B.A. degree holder, to continue teaching in the classroom. The principal who hired me was excited to hear that I had gone through the BOG/BA Program and needed no further explanation on its validity. This, I feel, is the biggest compliment to the program - that it is recognized as sufficient in today's job market, when a B.A. is essential.

Nancy Foerster

* * *

And then there was the young man who came into the office and said he had heard he could get fifteen hours for joining the program.

THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE: AN ASSESSMENT AND PROGNOSIS

C. Edward Gilpatric
Coordinator

When the Illinois Board of Governors of State Colleges and Universities created a new bachelor's degree program, known familiarly as "BOG," they gave UNI more than it expected, most of it for the good but not without its problems. As an educational program format, the BOG/BA Degree Program fills the gap between the traditional undergraduate programs and the completely competence-based degree that University Without Walls offers. The adult student for whom the program is designed can receive credit for his or her college-equivalent learning experiences. These credits are then combined with standard classroom courses to complete individually tailored programs of study. The response from the public has been enthusiastic to the point where the sheer numbers of students strain the resources of the university to serve them adequately. From the time of its origin, Northeastern has striven to be an innovative college. Through the BOG/BA Program it has willy-nilly joined a relatively small handful of pioneering universities which have ongoing and reasonably successful degree programs designed explicitly for the working adult.

The idea behind the mechanics of the degree is service to the working adult who wants to complete a college education. The idea is simple but has many ramifications and poses many challenges to traditional educational structures. Colleges obviously are not set up to serve adults in their undergraduate programs. If they were, the bulk of undergraduate courses would not be scheduled when most adults work, and college administrative offices would not close down about the time working adults begin to arrive for class. Curiously, colleges have always found it easier to grant honorary doctorates than competency-based undergraduate degrees. Even more of a deterrent to adults who wanted to earn a college degree was the patronizing and demeaning treatment accorded most adults and adult-education programs. Until the last few years, hardly any colleges had provision for examining and crediting the obvious, solid college-equivalent learning experiences and training that successful adults had achieved through their careers and avocations. Even as serious, dignified and highly trained a group of professionals as registered nurses are unable (in most colleges) to receive any credit for the intensive three-year program of study and training that they underwent. The reason is embarrassing to state: regardless of what they know, credit cannot be given because it was acquired in the wrong place, a non-accredited school. The solution that the BOG/BA Program incorporates is simple and straightforward: treat adults like adults. This remains the ideal, still not fully realized.

The impact this program has already had on the lives of hundreds of adults is striking. The testimonial letters from the first graduates indicate the difference the earning of a college degree has made on career development and personal self-image. A common reaction all along has been disbelief. Many adults cannot believe that they can be admitted to college just by completing an application and paying a \$15.00 fee. They cannot believe that all their previous college credits are transferred without quibbling about how long ago they earned them or in what subject areas. They cannot believe that they will not be penalized because they flunked out of college twenty-five years ago. They find it hard to believe that they will not be told what to do in fine detail, that they really can get the education they want and not what is judged by others to be more suitable. And finally, what is most incredible in the light of what colleges traditionally have done is that some colleges at least are beginning to recognize the fact that adults through their careers, through raising families, through community service, through their serious avocations and in many other ways can learn much that is college creditable.

The fact that the public has been so responsive to the BOG/BA Program and that nearly 1000 contented adults are foraging in the pastures of Bogland is not proof by itself that all is well. While conceding that some traditional academic practices may be arbitrary and restrictive, by contrast the BOG/BA Program and its guidelines may appear unduly permissive and unprincipled. Not all are agreed that open admissions is a sound policy. Complaints have been voiced about the experience-assessment process; about students "shopping" for credit; about quickie, undignified, rip-off degrees. The critics of the program would assuredly have some of their worries assuaged if they compared a random sample of BOG/BA graduates with a comparable sample of the graduates of the standard undergraduate programs in the BOG system of colleges. If only because they are working adults rather than late adolescents, the typical BOG'er is more mature and much more highly motivated to seek an education. In terms of ability to do competent work in the classroom, once again the typical BOG student is doing at least as well as the average UNI undergraduate. Yet the concerns about new and nontraditional programs are not frivolous, and those who have worked closely with the program are probably more aware than the critics of the real strengths and weaknesses of these new ventures. The next few paragraphs will survey some of the problems and criticisms, and then discuss the challenges that the new way poses to old tried and true.

Beyond any doubt the greatest amount of uncertainty and unease centers around crediting "life experience." This term is not an official term, and in any case is a misleading shorthand for the more cumbersome phrase, "college-equivalent learning experiences." Some fear that students seek out easy marks on the faculty who will recommend large amounts of undeserved credit. Some faculty members worry that there is not adequate departmental review of the recommendations that individual faculty members make, with the result that the awards may be overly generous or restrictive and unfair to the student. Still another area of concern is the lack of firm guidelines by which to assess students' nontraditional or nonclassroom learning experiences. Credit recommendations made by single faculty members, especially when the awards are substantial, may not appear highly credible to dispassionate outside observers, even if the review is done with competence and professionalism.

There have been adequate protections against rip-offs of the system by the students from the start. Students may shop all they want for easy marks; but the official form used for making recommendations of credit is given only to faculty members who are contacted directly by the Coordinator and his Assistant and who agree to make the assessment of the student's learning. The same experience cannot be credited through many departments, since each subsequent reviewer is informed of prior evaluations if these are judged to have a bearing on possible supplementary credit recommendations.

The real problems come with the relative newness of this whole process and the lack of clear guides for both students and faculty. There is a key principle and a fundamental assumption that govern this process. The principle is that the awards of credit are to be determined by the teaching faculty with occasional assistance of outside experts. The awards are not determined or initiated by administrative action. If a faculty member does not recommend credit for a particular learning experience, there is no credit awarded. The vital assumption that underlies the process is that the faculty of the BOG colleges are competent professionals who have the ability to judge when a person has achieved substantial competence in the disciplines in which the faculty member has had extensive training and/or regularly teaches. The guidelines indicate that a single faculty member is to sign the recommendation (technically labeled "Request for Credit Equivalency") and to assume responsibility for it.

The process of assessing nonclassroom student learning experiences has led to several paradoxes. Faculty members who have been awarding credit to students for years through evaluations of course-related work begin to doubt their own judgment when a different but related kind of learning experience is submitted to them for review. Chairmen who would not dream of setting up committees to review individual faculty members' grade reports now want committees to oversee the judgments made by individual members in their departments. Academics who claim that their course offerings are relevant suddenly find themselves at sea when asked to evaluate the real-life learning of mature students. Despite the relative newness of the process, it is not remotely as mysterious as appears at first blush. A faculty member who has an average of a dozen years of training and teaching experience within a discipline surely ought to be able to recognize whether and to what extent a student's learning experiences are creditable within the discipline.

Probably much of the unease relating to the crediting of "life experience" is due more to the novelty of the process than to its intrinsic difficulty. Some want the process to be objective, reliable and standardized. The sun will burn out before the evaluative procedures that would meet such criteria have been developed for the enormous range of adult learning experiences; and those who would urge such a standard vastly exaggerate the "objectivity" of present grading (= credit-awarding) practices. No doubt the process can be tidied up considerably. The Educational Testing Service is sponsoring an intensive, nationwide effort to refine the procedures used for evaluating nonstandard learning experiences, and UNI is a participating member institution of the ETS project known as CAEL (Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning). There is certainly a need both for additional guidance to students in preparing resumes and in documenting experiences. Since the awarding of credits for nontraditional learning experiences is more of an art than a science (much like teaching), it is best learned by doing it rather than by pondering it.

A concern of many students and some faculty is whether the BOG/BA degree will be acceptable to employers and graduate school admissions offices. The survey of our first one hundred graduates indicates conclusively that the degree itself does not raise problems except in isolated instances. Our own Graduate College takes the straightforward approach that each student is judged on his or her merits and not on the name of the degree. The fact that students in the BOG/BA Program receive substantial amounts of nongraded credits does raise a problem, but it is a problem that is common to any degree program in which a substantial portion of a student's work is ungraded, and not a special problem of the BOG/BA degree. The fact that BOG/BA students are not required to have an approved major but may graduate as students at large may create some difficulty for those seeking admission to graduate programs requiring specific kinds of preparation that closely approximate the various major fields. All students who have firm or even tentative plans for graduate studies are advised to check the entrance requirements of the graduate schools of their choice and to select an academic program that meets these requirements. Finally, we have the written assurance of certifying officials from both the Board of Education in Chicago and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction that the BOG/BA qualifies as an accredited bachelor's degree for certification purposes.

The strong response to the BOG/BA Program from the public has created a problem that most other colleges would welcome. UNI has more students both in its regular programs and in this program than it has resources to serve. Very simply, the BOG/BA Program is an open-admissions program for adults. Once the slack in the system has been taken up - and our recent budgets indicate that there was little enough slack to start with - some fairly acute second-generation problems arise. A recent change in budgetary arrangements for the UNI Extension Program has brought about a sharp decline in the number of off-campus courses during this school year and reverses the pattern of growth that had prevailed during the previous several years. Because the enrollments of

full-time day students have also continued to grow, fewer faculty have been free to teach in the evening on-campus program. The result has been that the opportunities for course work during the hours when most adults are not working have declined even though the number of part-time adults attending UNI has increased. One approach to this problem could be to close the open door. Most colleges that have followed this route quickly regret it, and there is the further hard fact that budgetary growth and enrollment growth go hand in hand. Another approach is to do a better job with what we have and to make a strong and urgent case to the Board of Higher Education and the General Assembly for increased funding. The deficiency appropriation received a short while ago would indicate that this approach can be successful. In my judgment we have no reason to fear growth. We should welcome it. We have the best location of any public university in Illinois with an enormous potential constituency to serve. There is bound to be a budgetary payoff if we open our classrooms to the public, especially to an adult public.

Any program must go through a shakedown period during which unsuspected problems arise. Because the enrollments ran much higher than anticipated or planned for, a heavy burden of administrative paperwork was created. Since the BOG/BA Program operates under a set of guidelines that differ somewhat from the standard undergraduate procedures, a heavy burden has been placed on the Admissions and Records Office, with only minimal relief provided recently through additional staff support. Without much effort, any number of additional minor problems could be listed, but it is more pleasant and eminently more productive to look at the challenges that programs like the BOG/BA Program offer.

The BOG/BA Program can serve as a bridge to a new kind of undergraduate education. Colleges should have a mechanism for routinely reviewing the achievements of students whether the learning is done in an accredited college or elsewhere. College admissions offices for too long have taken the easy way out, that is, of recognizing only the transcripts of accredited colleges and ignoring almost everything else that an adult student might have learned. It is shocking that the academic world has found no better way to estimate credit awards than to count the hours spent in class and no better way of conferring degrees generally than counting up credit hours. If colleges are going to rely increasingly on an adult, part-time student population to maintain their enrollments in the future, then it is imperative that they devise a method of dealing with adults as adults, and not assuming that experienced, competent adults know no more than the average high school graduate.

As the trend continues toward more part-time adult students and fewer full-time teenagers, in addition to the obvious adjustments of course scheduling, other developments will be needed as well. Individual contract learning will become more common. Weekend colleges are likely to experience rapid growth. In many fields a different kind of course will be needed to serve a more mature student body that comes with a large fund of practical experience and factual information but relatively little skill in systematic theory and analysis. For adults the internship or field experience which precedes the classroom experience should make the latter much more productive.

The adult student who already has a job and who is well advanced in a particular career will have diverse and perhaps incompatible expectations. Such adults will want a practical payoff from academic studies, and this is particularly true of large, easily identified segments of the students already enrolled. Many of the women in the program are homemakers with grown children who now want to enter the business world at a higher level than secretary or clerk. For many women the need is urgent because, through divorce or death of a spouse, they have become the head of a single-parent family. For many others, especially men in the thirty-to-forty age bracket, a college degree is regarded as a vital necessity for career advancement and mobility. Students often feel that they are a necessary inconvenience at academic institutions. Adult

students with family and work responsibilities tend much more than adolescents to look on college education as a product rather than as a carefree interlude between childhood and the world of work. The adult student wants a product with a minimum of inconvenience. Colleges that provide good service and good academic programs will thrive, while those that persist in offering academic merchandise of no discernible value to the busy adult will find themselves without customers.

These thoughts are intended to be blunt but not crass. If public education does not serve the public whose tax dollar supports it, whom does it serve? Yet underneath all this there is a curious paradox: the pragmatic adult really values a liberal education much more than the traditional college-age student. Liberal education, like youth, is mostly wasted on the young. The serious adult learner wants an education in a way that most teenagers do not. The competent and successful adult in many cases already has the training to do his or her job, and genuinely wants an education, albeit a practical education. Adults want courses that give analytic skills; that enhance their ability to communicate effectively in writing and speech; that increase their general literacy; that enrich their knowledge of music, art, and literature; that help them to understand the workings of the economy and government. A large and growing constituency that is eager for higher education is the after-fifty generation who have finally reached the point where they can both afford and enjoy learning experiences free from the pressures that younger adults are burdened with to achieve some modest degree of economic security. For the older adult the college degree is not a ticket to a job but a highly satisfying personal achievement. Degree programs like the BOG/BA Program are bringing increasing numbers of such adults to college campuses. Are we ready for them? Do we care?

* * *

NEXT...

Reynold Feldman on "Decentralizing Career Placement to the Academic Departments" and Michael Goldstein, Associate Vice-Chancellor for Urban Affairs at University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, on "Coordinating the Urban Involvement of Higher Education."



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