

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION
STUDIES

THE STUDENT PERSONNEL
POINT OF VIEW

A REPORT OF A CONFERENCE ON THE PHILOSOPHY AND DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT
PERSONNEL WORK IN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

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FOREWORD

In January 1925, the Division of Anthropology of the National Research Council met in Washington, D.C., of representatives of fourteen institutions of higher education to discuss problems of vocational guidance in college. Out of this conference developed the Intercollegiate Council on Personnel Methods which undertook to investigate ways and means of making available to educational institutions knowledge concerning students as individuals. In 1926, the group requested the American Council on Education to sponsor a study of personnel practices in colleges and universities. As a result of this request the Council established the Committee on Personnel Methods with H.E. Hawkes as chairman.

The initial undertaking of the Committee on Personnel Methods was a survey by L.B. Hopkins to determine what a number of institutions were then doing to assist the students to develop as individuals. The publication of the Hopkins report in *The Educational Record* of October 1926 focused national attention upon the importance of this area and upon the need for further research. During the next several years, the Committee on Personnel Methods, working through a number of subcommittees, inaugurated studies on certain aspects of the total student personnel problem. As a result of these studies, certain tools were prepared including the cumulative record cards, personality rating scales, and comparable achievement tests, which have influenced the improvement of student personnel services.

The American Council on Education in 1936 received the report of the Committee on Review of the Testing Movement¹ which recommended the establishment of a Committee on Measurement and Guidance to coordinate activities of the Council in the preparation of measurement materials. As a result of this recommendation, the Council discharged

the Committee on Personnel Methods and assigned its measurement functions to the new committee. The Council, however, recognized the need for further investigation of certain fundamental problems related to the clarification of so-called personnel work, the intelligent use of available tools, and the development of additional techniques and processes. Consequently, the Executive Committee authorized the calling of a conference to discuss the possible contribution of the Council in this area.

The following individuals met in Washington, D.C., on April 16 and 17, 1937, and unanimously adopted the following report. The group voted to refer the report to the Committee on Problems and Plans in Education of the American Council on Education.

Thyrza Amos	D.H. Gardner
F.F. Bradshaw	H.E. Hawkes
D.S. Bridgman	L.B. Hopkins
A.J. Brumbaugh	F.J. Kelly
W.H. Cowley	Edwin A. Lee
A.B. Crawford	Esther Lloyd-Jones
Edward C. Elliott	D.G. Paterson
Burton P. Fowler	C. Gilbert Wrenn
	C.S. Marsh
	D.J. Shank
	G.E. Zook

The Committee on Problems and Plans in Education at its meeting on May 6, 1937, approved the report of the conference and recommended to the Executive Committee of the Council that a Committee on Student Personnel Work be established with instructions to propose a program of action in line with the general statement of the conference. The Executive Committee authorized the organization of the new committee at its last meeting.

George F. Zook
President

June 1937

¹ The Testing Movement, AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION STUDIES, Series I, Vol. I, No. I (February 1937).

PHILOSOPHY

One of the basic purposes of higher education is the preservation, transmission, and enrichment of the important elements of culture - the product of scholarship, research, creative imagination, and human experience. It is the task of colleges and universities so to vitalize this and other educational purposes as to assist the student in developing to the limits of his potentialities and in making his contribution to the betterment of society.

This philosophy imposes upon educational institutions the obligation to consider the student as a whole - his intellectual capacity and achievement, his emotional make up, his physical condition, his social relationships, his vocational aptitudes and skills, his moral and religious values, his economic resources, his aesthetic appreciations. It puts emphasis, in brief, upon the development of the student as a person rather than upon his intellectual training alone.

A long and honorable history stands behind this point of view. Until the last three decades of the nineteenth century interest in the whole student dominated the thinking of the great majority of the leaders and faculty members of American colleges. The impact of a number of social forces upon American society following the Civil War, however, directed the interest of most of the strong personalities of our colleges and universities away from the needs of the individual student to an emphasis, through scientific research, upon the extension of the boundaries of knowledge. The pressures upon faculty members to contribute to this growth of knowledge shifted the direction of their thinking to a preoccupation with subject matter and to a neglect of the student as an individual. As a result of this change of emphasis, administrators recognized the need of appointing a new type of educational officer to take over the more intimate responsibilities which faculty members had originally included among their duties. At the same time, a number of new educational functions arose as the result of the growing complexity of modern life, the development of scientific techniques, the expansion of the size of student bodies, and the extension of the range of educational objectives.

These officers were appointed first to relieve administrators and faculties of problems of discipline; but their responsibilities grew with considerable rapidity to include a large number of other duties: educational counseling, vocational counseling, the administration of loans and scholarship funds, part-time employment, graduate placement, student health, extracurricular activities, social programs, and a number of others. The officers undertaking responsibility for these educational functions are known by many names, but during the past two decades they have come, as a group, to be called personnel officers.

A number of terms are in general use in colleges and universities related to the philosophy of education which we have outlined. Illustrative of these terms are "guidance," "counseling," "advisory," and "personnel." Of these, we believe the term "personnel" - prefaced by "student" - to be least objectionable. Rather than attempt a specific definition of "student personnel" as it is combined with such nouns as "work," "service," "administration," "research," etc., we offer the term, "the student personnel point of view" as indicative of the total philosophy embodied in the foregoing discussion. The functions which implement this point of view - indicated in the next section - may be designated as "student personnel services." Similarly, the performance of these functions may be designated "student personnel work."

This background and discussion of terminology we believe to be important. Personnel work is not new. Personnel officers have been appointed throughout the colleges and universities of this country to undertake a number of educational responsibilities which were once entirely assumed by teaching members of faculty. They have also, because of the expansion of educational functions, developed a number of student personnel services which have but recently been stressed. The philosophy behind their work, however, is as old as education itself.

I. Student Personnel Services

This philosophy implies that in addition to instruction and business management adapted to the needs of the individual student, an effective educational program includes - in one form or another - the following services adapted to the specific aims and objectives of each college and university:

1. Interpreting institutional objectives and opportunities to prospective students and their parents and to workers in secondary education.
2. Selecting and admitting students, in cooperation with secondary schools.
3. Orienting the student to his educational environment.
4. Providing a diagnostic service to help the student discover his abilities, aptitudes, and objectives.
5. Assisting the student throughout his college residence to determine upon his courses of instruction in light of his past achievements, vocational and personal interests, and diagnostic findings.
6. Enlisting the active cooperation of the family of the student in the interest of his educational accomplishment.
7. Assisting the student to reach his maximum effectiveness through clarification of his purposes, improvement of study methods, speech habits, personal appearance, manners, etc., and through progression in religious, emotional, social development, and other non-academic personal and group relationships.
8. Assisting the student to clarify his occupational aims and his educational plans in relation to them.
9. Determining the physical and mental health status of the student, providing appropriate remedial health measures, supervising the health of students, and controlling environmental health factors.
10. Providing and supervising an adequate housing program for students.
11. Providing and supervising an adequate food service for students.
12. Supervising, evaluating, and developing the extra-curricular activities of students.
13. Supervising, evaluating, and developing the social life and interests of students.
14. Supervising, evaluating, and developing the religious life and interests of students.
15. Assembling and making available information to be used in improvement of instruction and in making the curriculum more flexible.
16. Coordinating the financial aid and part-time employment of students, and assisting the student who needs it to obtain such help.

17. Keeping a cumulative record of information about the student and making it available to the proper persons.
18. Administering student discipline to the end that the individual will be strengthened, and the welfare of the group preserved.
19. Maintaining student group morale by evaluating, understanding, and developing student mores.
20. Assisting the student to find appropriate employment when he leaves the institution.
21. Articulating college and vocational experience.
22. Keeping the student continuously and adequately informed of the educational opportunities and services available to him.
23. Carrying on studies designed to evaluate and improve these functions and services.

COORDINATION

The effective organization and functioning of student personnel work requires that the educational administrators at all times (1) regard student personnel work as a major concern, involving the cooperative effort of all members of the teaching and administrative staff and the student body; and (2) interpret student personnel work as dealing with the individual student's total characteristics and experiences rather than with separate and distinct aspects of his personality or performance.

It should be noted that effective personnel work may be formally organized or may exist without direction or organization, and that frequently the informal type evidences a personnel point of view in an institution. In either case, the personnel point of view is most likely to permeate an entire staff when it is the result of an indigenous development in the institution. Imposition of personnel theories and practices from above or from outside is likely to result in pseudo-personnel work, with probable antagonism developing therefrom. However, it is obvious that coordination of student personnel work is urgently needed. We suggest several varieties of such needed coordination.

I. Coordination within Individual Institutions

The student personnel functions set forth earlier in this report should be coordinated within each educational institution. Existing conditions emphasize the need for such coordination. All personnel workers within an institution should cooperate with one another in order to avoid duplications of effort and in order to develop student personnel work evenly. The plan of coordination and its administration will, of course, vary with institutions of different types.

II. Coordination between Instruction and Student Personnel Work

Instruction is most effective when the instructor regards his classes both as separate individuals and as members of a group. Such instruction aims to achieve in every student a maximum performance in terms of that student's potentialities and the conditions under

which he works. Ideally each instructor should possess all the information necessary for such individualization. Actually such ideal conditions do not exist. Therefore a program of coordination becomes necessary which provides for the instructor appropriate information whenever such information relates to effective instruction.

An instructor may perform functions in the realms both of instruction and student personnel work. Furthermore, instruction itself involves far more than the giving of information on the part of the teacher and its acceptance by the student. Instructors should be encouraged to contribute regularly to student personnel records such anecdotal information concerning students as is significant from the personnel point of view. Instructors should be encouraged to call to the attention of personnel workers any students in their courses who could profit by personnel services.

Certain problems involving research are common to instruction and student personnel work. Any investigation which has for its purpose the improvement of instruction is at the same time a research which improves personnel procedures. Similarly, the results of any studies, the aim of which is to improve personnel procedures, should be disseminated throughout the instructional staff. In both cases wherever possible such projects should be carried on as cooperative ventures.

III. Coordination between the Business Administration and Student Personnel Work

In all financial or business matters having to do with student activities or student problems, either in terms of individuals or groups of individuals, coordination and correlation must exist between business administration and student personnel work. Examples of such matters are:

- Student loans
- Dormitories
- Dining halls
- Scholarships
- Student organizations
- Athletic management
- Deferred payments of fees
- Student participation in business management of the institution.

IV. Coordination of Personnel Work between Institutions of Secondary and Higher Education

There is a pressing need for further coordination between secondary schools and institutions of higher education. Since a special need exists for coordination between student personnel work in colleges and in secondary schools, copies of the data sent to the admissions department should be available to other college personnel officers. This would be a desirable place to begin coordination. The selection of students, where conditions will permit, should be based upon total personnel records as well as grades in courses. Examples of items in such record are:

- Ability in critical thinking
- Ability to cooperate

Physical and mental health

Aesthetic appreciation

Test records such as aptitude tests, reading ability, etc.

Vocational objective

Summarized predictions of college performance.

Coordination should also result in more effective interchange of information, problems, and techniques between the personnel units of colleges and secondary schools. Competent individuals should be available whenever secondary schools desire a presentation, either to students or faculty, of college opportunities and requirements.

Problems of research which require coordination between secondary schools and colleges reside in such areas as:

- a. Transfer from high school to college with particular reference to the last year in high school and the first year in college.
- b. The basis upon which high schools guide toward college.
- c. The basis upon which colleges select entrants.
- d. Freshman failures.
- e. Variations in the total requirements of different types of colleges; for example, engineering, dentistry, liberal arts, teacher training, etc.
- f. Existing types of coordination between secondary schools and colleges; for example, high school visitors, examination systems, coordinating committees, experimental investigations, etc.

V. Coordination among National Personnel Associations

During the past two decades a number of associations of various types of student personnel workers have come into existence. These associations perform valuable services in furthering personnel work and in bringing workers in the field into closer professional and personnel contact. We believe that the point of view for which all personnel people stand and the services which they render would be greatly enhanced were closer coordination developed between these associations. Hereinafter we propose that the American Council on Education establish or sponsor a committee on student personnel work in colleges and universities. We recommend that this committee, as one of its functions, undertake to bring about closer relationships between these associations.

VI. Coordination of Student Personnel Work with After-college Adjustment

Effective student personnel work should include as its culminating activity adequate provision for induction of students into after-college life.

The satisfactory adjustment of graduates to occupational life constitutes one important basis for evaluation of an institution's educational effectiveness, since it stimulates a continual reexamination of educational procedures and the effect of those procedures upon the men and women who make up the student body of the college. Moreover, coordination between college and occupational life rests essentially upon more complete information covering the various types of work into which college graduates go.

This conference also wishes to emphasize the necessity for conceiving of after-college adjustment as comprehending the total living of college graduates, including not only

their occupational success but their active concern with the social, recreational, and cultural interests of the community. Such concern implies their willingness to assume those individual and social responsibilities which are essential to the common good.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Student personnel work is developing with some rapidity throughout the country. Annually a large number of institutions undertake for the first time additional student personnel functions or they further develop services already established. At the same time new methods of organizing student personnel services are coming into prominence; the literature of the field is expanding voluminously; and problems in need of careful investigation become more numerous every year.

Because of these and other considerations a need for national leadership in student personnel work is becoming continuously more obvious. If the expansion and development that the colleges and universities of the country are experiencing in the student personnel field is to be as desirable and effective as it should be, some national agency needs to be available to assist administrators, faculty members, and student personnel officers in their developmental efforts. No such national agency now exists, and a careful canvassing of the student personnel associations which have grown up brings us to the unanimous conclusion that no one of them is able to become that national agency.

We, therefore, propose that the American Council on Education establish or sponsor a committee on student personnel work in American colleges and universities. This committee should, in our judgment, undertake the following activities:

I. NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT PERSONNEL WORK

This survey should be conducted throughout the country after the pattern of the one undertaken by L.B. Hopkins for the American Council on Education in 1926. Such a study would require the services of but one individual who would visit five or six institutions in each of half a dozen institutional categories. The undertaking would result in an overview rather than a detailed study, and its publication would satisfy the growing demand for current authoritative information about the student personnel field. It would be built around a check list of the functions we have listed. The Hopkins survey had such a great influence that we believe an up-to-date and analogous study published in concise form would be of immediate interest and value to administrators and faculty members throughout the country.

II. INTERPRETATION OF THE PROBLEMS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

A short volume with some such title as "The College Student and His Problems" should be written and published. The purpose of this volume would be to inform administrators, faculty, and the general public of the complex human problems that are involved in education. Stressing scholarship and intellectual development, educators frequently take for granted or actually overlook the philosophy which we have herein before called the student personnel point of view. The preparation and publication of the volume which we propose would, we believe, do much to bring this philosophy to the

attention of all individuals concerned with higher education. It would, moreover, bring this philosophy to their attention in terms of the actual experiences of students rather than through an abstract discussion.

III. HANDBOOKS ON STUDENT PERSONNEL FUNCTIONS

A series of handbooks on particular student personnel functions should be written and published. The survey proposed above would provide a panoramic picture of the entire field. The handbooks that we are suggesting would furnish detailed information about specific personnel functions. Data for these handbooks would come from two general sources: first, from the information gathered by the survey on the detailed operation of specific personnel functions in the institutions he visits and, second, from the literature. Each handbook would stress the best practices developed in the handling of each function. The work of writing each handbook should be under the direction of a committee of three. This committee should include an active worker in the special field under discussion and a representative of the appropriate national personnel organization.

IV. Research

Obviously, student personnel services will never develop as they should unless extensive and careful research is undertaken. We, therefore, urge that the facilitation and direction of research be considered an essential responsibility of the committee. In this field we envisage the committee as important in two directions: first, in encouraging other agencies to undertake investigations, and, second, in carrying on several investigations on its own. We list below projects of both types.

Research by Other Agencies

We propose that the Committee on Measurement and Guidance of the American Council on Education be requested to consider the desirability of the following four investigations:

1. *Aptitude testing.* The investigation of aptitudes on a national scale comparable to the work undertaken by the Cooperative Test Service but in the field of differential vocational as well as educational aptitudes.
2. *Social development.* The development of instruments for measuring social adjustment and social maturity.
3. *Diagnostic techniques.* The study of the field of usefulness of existing diagnostic instruments and the development of new instruments.
4. *Scholastic aptitude test scale.* Bringing together on a comparable scale the norms of various widely used scholastic aptitude tests.

We also propose that the National Occupational Conference be requested to consider the desirability of carrying forward the following work:

1. *Occupational information.* Gathering and publishing occupational information for college students with particular emphasis upon periodic census data and trends.
2. *Traits needed in occupations.* Working with the Committee on Measurement and Guidance in the study of human traits significant for various occupations particularly those which college students enter.

Research by the Committee on Student Personnel Work

A number of research projects need to be undertaken in the immediate future and responsibility for which no existing agencies seem able to assume. We, therefore, propose that the committee secure support for the following four studies:

1. *Student out-of-class life.* College students spend the majority of their time outside the classrooms and laboratories. We have, however, no significant data as to the activities in which they engage. In order to understand the educational importance of their activities we propose that on a score of campuses throughout the country data be collected. Incidentally, this research would be relatively inexpensive since on every campus individuals may be found to do the work without compensation.
2. *Faculty-student out-of-class relationships.* Much is said frequently of the place that faculty members have in student personnel work. We have, however, few facts and we propose that data should be gathered from a number of institutions following much the same techniques as proposed in study "I" above.
3. *Financial aid to students.* Large sums of money are available in many institutions for scholarships and loans. In addition, the National Youth Administration has been spending many millions during the past three years to help students to stay in college. The problem of who should be helped and how much is growing more important every year. We propose that this problem in its wide ramifications might well be studied. Perhaps funds for much of this work could be secured from the National Youth Administration.
4. *Follow-up study of college students.* Every year over a hundred thousand students graduate from our colleges. What happens to them and what effect their college work has had upon their vocational and personal adjustments we can only guess. We, therefore, propose that the committee develop a method for making follow-up studies and that this method be made available to interested institutions.

V. ADVISORY SERVICE TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

An advisory service to colleges and universities interested in the improvement of student personnel work should be developed. While the proposed survey is being undertaken and while the suggested handbooks are being written, the committee will inevitably have addressed to it a number of inquiries about problems within its field of interest. These inquiries cannot be answered authoritatively until these two ventures are finished, but meanwhile the committee should assume responsibility for directing such correspondents to the individuals best qualified to assist them. When the survey is finished, and the handbooks available, however, we propose that the committee actively promote the best student personnel practices which its work has brought to light.