JAY DAVIS CONNER

The Junior College Adjusts to Increasing Enrollments

Long a pioneer in the junior college movement, one state is attempting through various means to improve curriculum planning for meeting the expanding enrollment.

A SERIES of three articles treating curriculum planning in the field of higher education doubtless should be prepared on a national rather than a regional basis. Since the writer is not qualified to present a national point of view, the problems and solutions herein discussed will be expressed from the point of view of California junior colleges. California is unique among the states in the degree to which it has developed its three-segment system of public higher education—junior colleges, state colleges, and the University of California. There are in California 62 public junior colleges, 10 state colleges, and the University of California with its eight campuses. Full-time enrollments in these three types of institutions for 1956 were as follows: junior colleges, 74,082; state colleges, 38,338; University of California, 37,522. The independent colleges and universities of the state enrolled a total of 42,396 full-time students.[1]

From the above figures it will be apparent that the 62 public junior colleges of California are making a significant contribution to higher education in this state, enrolling as they do about the same number of full-time students as the state colleges and the University of California combined. In terms of the lower division, the contribution of the public junior college is even more impressive. In the first two years of college work the public junior colleges of California are taking care of 74,082, the state colleges 17,227, the State University 13,127, and all independent colleges and universities combined, 19,661.[2]

Thus, with nearly 60 percent of the total full-time enrollment in grades thirteen and fourteen being found in public junior colleges in California, it is apparent that problems of coordination are of paramount importance. At the present time many colleges and universities find that over half their upper division students have come to them from public junior colleges. Projections of enrollment potentials indicate this condition will continue and perhaps increase.[3] These projections indicate that even without new institutions, attendance figures will mount by 1970 to 195,598 in the public junior colleges, 96,900 in the state col-

[1] "Full-time and Part-time Students and Veterans in Institutions of Higher Learning," Bureau of Education Research, California State Department of Education, Sacramento, 1957.

[2] Hugh G. Price. "California Junior Colleges," unfinished manuscript scheduled for 1957 publication, California State Department of Education.

[3] *A Study of the Need for Additional Centers of Public Higher Education in California.* Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1957.

leges, and 90,350 in the University of California.

These statistics point directly to the most important problem for curriculum planning in California higher education —coordination. The importance of this phase of the problem is further highlighted by such factors as a highly mobile population, rapid change in the basic economic and industrial development of the state, fluctuating needs of the military services, rising demand for technically trained personnel in all lines of work, and employment conditions in general.

The factors of economic, industrial, and occupational changes create a need for continuous reappraisal of role and function as between the University, the four-year college, and the junior college. Agriculture education serves as a convenient example of the kind of curriculum problem which is posed for all institutions of higher education in California. Half a century ago agriculture represented the major industry of this state and accounted for the majority of all occupational opportunities. As recently as 1945 agriculture provided for 13 percent of all persons gainfully employed. Latest available figures indicate that this figure has dropped to less than 5 percent. At the same time, agriculture continues as one of the largest income-producing activities in the state. This means simply that agriculture is rapidly changing in its character as an occupational field. The small farm, family operated, is rapidly disappearing as the basis for agricultural pursuit. In its place is coming the large holding, highly integrated and mechanized in its operation, geared to scientific management along the lines of big business.

Agriculture education today, therefore, must stress such factors as marketing, finance, labor management, technical and mechanical specilization, related service occupations, and storage and shipping, as well as the principles and practices of scientific farming. In other words, agriculture in California no longer needs or offers opportunity for large numbers of farmers with elementary agricultural training, but does need and offers opportunity to persons intensively trained not only in management but in a host of related service occupations and technical specializations. By projection, the replacement needs for farm operators in the State appear to be about 5,000 per year; in contrast, the statewide immediate needs for agriculturally trained persons in business were found to be in the neighborhood of 8,000. Clearly, the implication for curriculum planners is a reappraisal of old patterns and sequences of training, along with a realistic readjustment of the role the high school, the junior college, the four-year college, and the university must cooperatively assume to meet these changing needs.

A similarly spectacular revolution is taking place in the fields of engineering and related occupations. The past decade has been one of almost continuous conference and debate over the role of the University, the four-year college, and the junior college in the field of engineering. In the early stages University personnel typically insisted that engineering must remain exclusively a University responsibility. Increasingly, however, the demands of industry for technically trained personnel, both at and below the level of graduate engineers, have focused attention of curriculum

***JAY DAVIS CONNER** is associate superintendent of public instruction and is chief, Division of Instruction, California State Department of Education, Sacramento.*

planners upon the necessity for technical education to satisfy these demands. Indeed, a growing segment of industry is claiming that the graduate engineer does not necessarily make the best person to fill many of the occupational fields related to and identified with engineering but which do not require the skills inherent in research and design but only technical competence in the practical procedures of layout, foremanship, etc. Out of prolonged and still unresolved discussion and interchange, there is appearing a clear indication of future development along lines of shared and coordinated responsibility.

What is happening in the fields of agriculture and engineering is occurring to a greater or less degree in other occupational fields. The future role of the junior college is clearly revealed in the changing ratio of technically trained to unskilled labor in the economy of our country. In turn, this new role of the junior college in providing terminal training for many of the subprofessional occupations, and transfer training for others, defines the problem of coordination. Both types of training must be closely related and interdependent if the needs of our economy are to be met efficiently and with a minimum amount of lost motion.

Improving Curriculum Planning

With these needs clearly in mind, the junior colleges of California have been moving rapidly in developing the machinery for better curriculum planning and coordination. First, in an attempt to set their own house in order, these junior colleges decided that machinery was needed to promote better standards both for courses of study and instruction. The first move was to establish an accreditation system which would be based not upon the patterns of four-year colleges but upon their own special aims and objectives. Through conferences with the Western College Association and the State Department of Education, groundwork was laid for accreditation procedures appropriate to these aims jointly administered and controlled by the three agencies but without the domination of any one. Legislation was sought and obtained to place this procedure upon a sound and firm legal and financial basis.

Simultaneously an intensive, foundation supported study of the role of the junior college in general education was conducted on a statewide basis under the general supervision of the American Council on Education, Western Division. This study led to the formation of a continuing Committee on General Education which serves as a statewide and over-all planning and coordinating group enlisting the aid and cooperation of many academic fields. For example, this committee is currently engaged in guiding the junior college level participation in a statewide study of the social studies throughout the entire scope of the locally-controlled public school system of the state, from kindergarten through junior college.

A recent move in the same direction was the establishment in 1956 of a statewide conference for deans of instruction. This, the first meeting of its kind for personnel engaged in over-all curriculum planning and instructional leadership, was so successful that it has been established as a continuing conference, meeting in alternate years, but with provision for interim committee work.

No account would be complete without mention of the notable contributions of the professional associations devoted to specialized fields of instruction.

The University of California has given

significant leadership throughout the years to better coordination of higher education, not only through conducting several meetings each year for the consideration of mutual problems by all the various agencies concerned with higher education, but through continuous public and professional encouragement and support of the junior college movement. Through its Office of Relations with Schools, the University maintains constant liaison and identification with the problems of the junior colleges and has at all times been active in seeking fair and mutually advantageous solutions to problems of admissions, transfers, and curriculum.

One of the troublesome problems in California has been to bring about a clear definition of the role of various educational institutions and agencies in adult and extension education. Within the past fifteen years three successive statewide committees under the joint sponsorship of the State Department and the University have struggled with this problem. The problem does not appear to be entirely solved though notable progress has been made in identifying special areas of responsibility and in setting up machinery for the adjudication of problems of jurisdiction. Involved are the locally administered programs of adult education, the extended day programs of the junior colleges, and extension programs of the four-year state colleges, the independent four-year colleges and universities, and the University of California. Each of the advisory committees has issued reports and recommendations designed to lay down the general principles needed to insure coordination, as well as to deal with certain current specific problems of pressing importance. In general, the practice of appointing local committees representative of all the agencies named, under the chairmanship of a district superintendent of schools, has proven to be an equitable way of deciding which agency is best equipped to meet specific needs at a particular time in a given community. Such voluntary machinery is cumbersome at best, and problems of unilateral action without prior consideration by these arbitration boards will probably continue to plague this area of educational service for some time to come. The problem is further complicated by a multiplicity of bases for financial support as among the various agencies concerned, indeed these problems often outweigh the educational requirements as causal factors. Need for early and satisfactory solutions is indicated not only by the amount of professional concern but by recent activity of interim committees of the legislature.

Current developments in secondary education give promise of promoting closer coordination not only among the high schools of the state but of promoting better articulation between all secondary education and the institutions of higher education. California for decades has resisted accreditation of the public high schools of the state as such accreditation systems have been developed and administered in other sections of the nation. This resistance reflects a deep seated fear of domination by institutions of higher education. However, there has been increasing recognition among the secondary schools that maintaining and insuring minimum standards of quality in educational offerings is essential if restrictive legislative and regulatory controls are to be avoided. Consequently, the secondary schools have developed a system of accreditation essentially based upon self-surveys. After careful experimentation this system has been approved by the State Department

of Education and a Commission on Accreditation is in process of formation. First, four studies are initiated and conducted by the high school itself in accordance with procedures and upon forms provided by the commission. One of these studies is conducted by the school administration, one by the teaching staff, one by the students, and the fourth by the non-certificated employees. Following this self-survey the school is visited by a team which uses the accumulated data as the basis for its own first-hand study and evaluation. A report to the State Commission by this visiting team, accompanied by the self-study results, forms the basis for action by the commission after opportunity for the local school administration to have a hearing if the report is negative. The commission is equally divided in membership between secondary school administrators and a representative each from the State Department of Education, the State University, the State Colleges, Junior Colleges, Western College Association, California Teachers Association, and the California Association of School Administrators. At the 1957 session of the State Legislature a section of the Education Code authorizing junior colleges to pay the expenses of accreditation visits was amended to include secondary schools. Accreditation on this basis is voluntary, but there is little doubt that local pressures for accreditation will force the vast majority of public high schools of the state to seek it.

Finally, the problem of teacher certification has been under intensive study in California. A committee under the leadership of the California Association for Teacher Education has rendered a report and recommendations for sweeping reductions in the number and kind of credentials which should be issued for teaching in the locally controlled public schools of the state. This report will be circulated generally throughout the state for the first time in the fall of 1957. Reactions to the proposals cannot be predicted accurately at this time. It seems certain the recommendations will provoke widespread discussion and spirited reaction from various interest groups. Among the points of discussion which very likely will arise is the question of whether teaching at the junior college level should be subject to State licensure through the regular and provisional credentials. Advocates of freedom from existing requirements point to the colleges and universities which have no such licensure but depend entirely upon the accreditation process for insuring standards of quality in their educational offerings. The report recommends a continuation of the credential procedure for the junior college as a necessary safeguard under existing conditions of local control and operation of the 62 separate institutions. Unquestionably the credential requirement works some hardship in the recruitment of faculty from some fields of specialization—on the other hand it has not been established that these difficulties are serious or insurmountable within the pattern of credential requirements. So the debate waxes.

Thus, with current movements on all fronts and at all levels, with interested participation by public as well as by professional agencies, with continuing legislative and financial pressures for more clearly defined goals and procedures, the problem of better standards, better coordination of offerings, facilitation of transfer and admissions between and among the three public agencies of higher education occupies the center of the stage in the State of California at this time.

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