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Students as Consumers: The Need for Better Information

by Sara Green

The consideration of a student as a consumer of education is a relatively new concept. If a student is viewed as an individual seeking a product (knowledge and skills) that must be purchased (tuition and other costs) from among several competing markets (institutions of higher education), then identifying the student as an educational consumer is appropriate. Students, more than other consumers, invest not only money, but also a considerable amount of time and energy in obtaining a product. The report of the Federal Interagency Committee on Education (FICE) (1975) states:

> The age of 'consumerism' has coincided with the emergence of education as a business. Education has been sold to consumers who are seldom recognized as such. Laws typically refer to the educational consumer as a 'student', as a 'beneficiary', as a 'dependent' and so on. Students are educational consumers. (p. 8)

There are at least two groups that tend to reject this philosophy. The first group consists of those educators and others who point out that much of education is purchased with public funds--state taxes, scholarships, grants and loans. Therefore, they contend that the society at large is the true consumer of educational services. Others criticize the consumer theory based on the very nature of education. The consumer movement has attempted to measure objectively those aspects of education which are largely subjective and vary with the individual learner, i.e., personal growth, physical skill development, and developing a sense of purpose. Applying the consumer model may seem more acceptable if education is viewed as an interaction process between the teacher and learner, each assuming responsibility for part of the process. The teacher has a responsibility to provide quality instruction, supervision and guidance, while students must be held responsible to attend classes, complete assignments and study (Root & Miser, 1977). Stark (1976) notes the consumer movement seeks to balance and give "equal emphasis to student rights and institutional responsibilities" (p. 2).

While either position is defensible, it is of greater significance that these and other arguments have moved beyond academic debate and into the courtroom. Increasingly, courts are applying the rights of commercial consumers to student complaints against educational institutions. One widespread impact of court intrusion into discipline matters has resulted in the demise of in loco parentis on college campuses. Of more recent importance are the number of court cases that have established that the primary legal relationship between the student and institution is grounded in contract theory. Hammond (1975) further explains:

> This theory assumes that the student and the university are parties to a contract, each giving certain benefits and detriments in order to fulfill the agreement. The institution in advertising and seeking students, in effect, makes an offer to the student. The student, by registering, accepts. The student agrees to pay tuition and fees and the college agrees to provide instruction as delineated for the desired degree provided the student remains in good standing academically and abides by the institution's rules and regulations. (p. 29)

IMPETUS FOR THE CONSUMER MOVEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In reviewing the literature, there appears to be general agreement that the foundation for the student consumer movement was laid by former President Kennedy in his 1962 consumer message to Congress. In his address, Kennedy defined consumer rights as the right of the individual to be safe, to be heard, to be informed, and to choose (Stark, 1976). Today, these same consumer rights are being applied to students in the educational marketplace.

There is also an increasing awareness that as the traditional college-age population decreases, students will become a scarce commodity. There is concern that recruiting tactics will become overly aggressive and unfairly misrepresent institutions in a competitive race for students. On the other hand, students are demanding better quality service. The student clientele is changing--younger students have been granted franchise, the right to enter into contracts, and other adult responsibilities. At the same time, higher education is experiencing an increase in the number of older and part-time students who are more critical in measuring their time and money tradeoff with what they can expect to receive in increased job opportunities and other objectives. Students, as well as their parents, look upon the years spent in postsecondary education as an investment from which returns are expected. However, in light of today's job market, students are becoming skeptical about future employment after postsecondary education.

The federal government has become a leading force in the movement for student consumer rights. Federal legislation has enabled more citizens to pursue postsecondary education by easing access and providing greater choice by making available federal funds to be used at both proprietary and non-profit institutions and colleges. "Portable dollars" in the hands of potential students may influence unscrupulous recruiting practices. The federal government also has a great concern that its federal aid funds are not abused by the recipient institutions.

Other factors that have led to the growth of the student consumer movement include: increased student involvement in university governance; the rapid growth in the number of institutions of higher education; a growing distrust in the legitimacy of decisions made by faculty and administration; the overall increase in costs; and a national concern for consumer rights in the wider consumer market.

FOCUS ON BETTER INFORMATION

Often considered the primary potential consumer abuse, false and misleading information may also be the most debilitating. Despite the fact that much information about higher education is required by

federal and state agencies, little tends to be published or released in a form that might be useful to students (Stark, 1976). Dykstra (1966) stated:

> Higher education, one of the most expensive investments made by many families, is still not covered by the types of protective legislation that guard the purchases of a dishwasher. . . . It is probable that in few other transactions does the consumer know less about the relative merits of the offerings of the different vendors. . . . Colleges often do little to clarify matters, and much to obfuscate. (p. 446)

The need for better information is largely related to the increasing number of persons who have been given the opportunity to pursue postsecondary education by means of federal financial assistance, as well as the growing number of postsecondary institutions. The decision whether to pursue education beyond high school and which institution to attend are important choices. The decision becomes more complex as the people who now seek postsecondary education have a greater diversity of interests. They must attempt to match themselves to a wider variety of institutions. And, as educational costs have risen and the prospects for later employment become uncertain, the economic consequences of such decisions have increased. The ability to match what the student seeks and what the institution offers can not be made without quality information on which to base a decision.

Inadequate information stands as a barrier to enrollment. Wren (1976) contends that lack of clear information on college opportunities discourages many students from considering college attendance. Any effort to improve a student's ability to make decisions about postsecondary education should consider the four steps of the decision-making process as outlined by El-Khawas (1977):

(1) defining <u>whether</u>, <u>when</u> and <u>how</u> to pursue further study;
(2) deciding on a <u>program</u> of study;
(3) <u>screening</u> among a range of institutions to identify those that have the desired characteristics;
(4) <u>selecting</u> which institution to attend.

These decisions can further be broken down into choices such as full-time versus part-time enrollment, vocational or general education, living arrangements, costs, and many others.

"Better" information, although a relative term, is indeed better "if it improves the ability of the students to make rational, informed decisions about postsecondary education" (El-Khawas, 1977, p. 16). "Better" information may be characterized as statements that describe the institution's special features, the use of empirical data, addressing the information needs of different types of students, and describing the kinds of experiences students are likely to encounter at the institution. It is hoped that the information on likely consequences of attending the institution will lead to better decisions, more realistic expectations, and thus increase student consumer satisfaction.

In a report prepared for the National Conference on Better Information for Student Choice, three major topics demanding attention were identified (El-Khawas, 1977). Information on costs and financial aid is of crucial importance in the decision whether and where to

pursue postsecondary education. Yet, state and federal programs are sometimes so confusing as to eligibility criteria that students often do not know whether they can expect to receive aid. Examples of how financial information could be improved include: illustrations of aid packaging; explanation of eligibility criteria; and a statement of estimated costs for courses, student budgets, and projected costs for four years.

The area of academic offerings and requirements was also identified as a major concern. Although catalogs and bulletins may describe program offerings, policies, and requirements, Task Force members emphasized the need of relating new information about student experiences, even on subjective aspects such as student views on faculty-student contact and the reactions of recent graduates to their education. Other information on academic offerings might include information on the interests and availability of faculty, and honest assessments of the relative strengths of each academic program. The third topic is that of "outcomes of attendance." This topic is often intentionally neglected by institutions for fear of exposing information that would not be beneficial to them. Data on academic, personal, and employment outcomes should help students develop more realistic expectations. More specifically, information should be available on the patterns of attrition and retention, ratings on student satisfaction with the programs, frequency of changing majors, and studies to determine if graduates are employed in jobs related to their major field of study.

STRATEGIES FOR NOW AND THE FUTURE

Consumer protection for students--at all levels--is predicated on the assumption that abuses can be eliminated if better information is provided, thereby enhancing the consumer's ability to make wise decisions. It appears that the federal government has provided the most initiative and is likely to continue to supply the impetus by establishing guidelines favorable to student consumers. Institutions must take action to stay one step ahead of federal regulations. The identification of needed improvements requires two steps: (1) assessing the information needs of students; and (2) reviewing the existing information for lacking or deficient content (El-Khawas, 1977). To collect the large amount of required information will necessitate commitment by the institution to coordinate all the segments of the institution that must pool their resources to provide various data. Perhaps task forces will need to be formed to scrutinize catalogs, handbooks, and other published policies that could be interpreted as part of the contract between the student and the institution and would therefore be liable to judicial action.

Students also have a responsibility if they expect to retain their credibility as educational consumers. El-Khawas (1977) recommends that students "ask questions about what is likely to happen as a result of attending an institution; inquire about the experiences of past students; and expect that institutions will increasingly attempt to provide detailed answers to such questions" (p. 80). Student consumers should also take an active role in pressing for programs that will assist students in evaluating the information provided by and about postsecondary institutions.

The FICE report (1975) indicates that the pressures for accountability and the various charges leveled against institutional ethics and credibility in its relationships with students are not likely to decrease. "Better information should be provided by all institutions,

particularly if the larger objective--of improving student ability to make rational, informed choices--is to be achieved" (El-Khawas, 1977, p. 76). Advocates of student consumerism must now begin to develop methods to test the central hypothesis of their argument: that information on likely consequences of attending the institution can lead to more realistic expectations and, in turn, to better decisions.

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An Interview with Dave DeCoster

by Anthony Zizos

Basic career decisions can sometimes be a combination of external circumstances, intuition, luck...and a little planning.

David Arthur DeCoster has been the Director of Residence Life at Indiana University for almost seven years. He recently announced his acceptance of the Dean of Students position at the University of Nebraska starting in March, 1978. This interview will hopefully provide my colleagues the opportunity to become better acquainted with Dave, and further understand the process of professional development.

Q. *Where did you complete your undergraduate work, and what experiences during that time did you have in the area of student personnel?*

A. I began college study at the University of Michigan in mechanical engineering but, after my freshman year, I decided that this was not the field for me. That decision came shortly after my advisor informed me that the School of Engineering preferred that I didn't return! From there I went into liberal arts, and then found my way into the School of Education. I suppose that this change was a pretty basic decision in terms of career development. During this same period of time, my sophomore year, I was hired as a Staff Counselor, which is similar to the Resident Assistant position here at Indiana University. It was my experience as a Staff Counselor that primarily helped me to choose to enter the School of Education, and as I continued to work in residence halls, it also lead me to pursue a Master's Degree in Counseling and Guidance. Even after completing my master's work, I had not made up my mind in terms of teaching in public schools or some type of position in higher education. I had interviewed and was offered positions in both fields.

Q. *Were your interviews for positions in student personnel work a result of contacts you made with Deans and supervisors while you were working on your master's degree at the University of Michigan?*

A. No, we did not have the same type of program at Michigan as you folks have here at Indiana University. There weren't any people concerned about placement in the area of Student Affairs. After interviewing for public education, which occurs earlier than the higher education process, I caught a ride to the ACPA convention in Chicago with a supervisor of mine from the residence halls program. This was my first convention. No one had ever told me about these conventions, so for the most part I was quite naive. I hadn't formally registered for the convention or the placement process. Consequently, I wasn't allowed to interview there, but I did take down the relevant information concerning jobs that were attractive to me and Joanne, since we were to be married that same summer. After returning, we both looked through my notes, looking for a position in a warmer region of the country. That is what lead me to apply for a position at the University of Florida. Well, things seemed to be working out there, and they finally contacted me and said they'd like to arrange for a campus visit. I didn't have the money to fly down there and they didn't

have the funds to bring me to Florida -- with that bit of news, our conversation ended. A couple days later they called back and offered to interview me over the phone. For some reason that sounded reasonable to me, we talked for about an hour, and I accepted a position about a week later. The position was comparable to the Coordinators' position here at Indiana University, with responsibility for a residence hall of about 650 students. I spent three years in that role and then decided to go back to school for an advanced degree. At any rate, I'm not recommending this process of career choice and job selection. I guess sometimes a little intuition and a little luck can compensate for lack of wisdom and maturity. For whatever reasons, joining the University of Florida turned out to be a fine decision which led to a number of lasting friendships.

Q. *When and why did you decide to come to Indiana University?*

A. After completing my doctorate I had taken a position at the University of Georgia. About a year and a half into my experience there, the position at Indiana University was brought to my attention. The main attraction to Indiana, of course, was the fine tradition they have in the area of residence education. I was not only impressed with the tradition, but with the people associated with I.U. as well. I knew I'd be working with a fine group of professionals not only within our Department and in the Division of Student Services, but also in the Departments of College Student Personnel Administration and Higher Education. You can't really get a good feel for the student body through an interview process, so I'd have to say one of the most important reasons for taking the job was the fine colleagues at this institution. It's important to me that there be a professional support group in which a person gets a diversity of opinion, reactions to ideas, and the opportunity to enter into joint projects with others. It's that type of environment that promotes professional growth. I knew Indiana had that to offer. I knew of the tremendous impact that this institution has had on our profession.

Q. *What is the difference between the Dave DeCoster that first arrived at Indiana University and the Dave DeCoster that is preparing to leave?*

A. Probably more mature, less impatient, a little more mellow. Part of that comes with experience in any position and maybe it's just part of getting older. As a younger person, I tended to see a goal in its ideal form and felt a sense of failure unless the goal was realized in its pure form without compromise. But, there is a better chance to become frustrated when you think in those terms. I've become more sensitive to feeling a sense of accomplishment as long as positive movement toward goals is evident.

Q. *Is the Dean of Students position at the University of Nebraska the ultimate height in Student Personnel Administration that you aspire to reach?*

A. I tend not to think in those terms. I understand that at any point in my life there may be a need to rethink some things. Part of the learning experience at the University of Nebraska will be finding out just how much I enjoy administrative functions. I may find that some of the things that excite me the most, while working in student development, may be expanded in these new responsibilities. On the other hand, I might find the opposite to be true -- and then I'll have to adjust.

Q. *What are the typical decisions people pursuing a career in student personnel work make as they develop professionally?*

A. There are three general skill areas in our profession: counseling, teaching, and administrative skills. When we make decisions in terms of position selection, we are really making a decision on skill emphasis. For example, by accepting a Dean of Students position I'm deciding to emphasize administrative skills and responsibilities. This type of decision may be more difficult for young professionals if they have to consider a position that's primarily administrative when they have previously been in a role that emphasized counseling skills and provided maximum opportunities for student relationships. The tendency may be to feel, "well I'm copping out on students; my profession is all about student development and now I'm thinking about a role where those relationships are going to be minimized in favor of some other skills." But if you look at the totality of student development and understand that we need all three types of skills or strategies for a successful program, perhaps career decisions can be made in a somewhat rational manner -- and in a way that allows each of us to seek roles that will best utilize our individual interests and talents.

Problems of Graduate and Professional Students

by Marc A. Kaplan

Graduate and professional students are an often neglected segment of the student population of universities. Without them the cost of instruction at large universities would soar, for graduate students often teach the masses of underclasspeople in the large introductory courses. Yet, few university administrators have evidenced concern for the problems often encountered by graduate students.

People do not become fully functioning nor do they develop integrated personalities with the receipt of their baccalaureate degrees. There are developmental tasks to complete and "passages" to negotiate. In many cases, the problems associated with the student experience are aggravated by the added pressures and demands of graduate school. Attendance at graduate school can be an unnatural act; it tends to prolong dependence, and the psychological tension characteristic of this situation can prove to be debilitating for a young adult. Further, the extreme academic pressures often associated with graduate study may cause most students great concern.

Student personnel services in major universities where graduate training tends to be offered are not usually oriented toward graduate students and their problems but toward typical undergraduate needs. It is not always necessary to provide separate services for graduate and professional students, but student personnel workers in all areas should be aware of the special problems of such students in order to be able to provide appropriate assistance. The special problems of graduate students can be divided into two general categories: personal problems and academic problems.

PERSONAL PROBLEMS

All students may have personal problems dealing with social, vocational, and psychological concerns. On college campuses such problems are commonly dealt with by psychological counselors and psychiatrists. Of special concern to graduate students is the dissonance between the developmental tasks which they feel the need to complete and the actual situation in which they find themselves.

Developmental Tasks

Coons (1970) identified five developmental tasks which college students complete in the process of the resolution of adolescence: (1) resolution of the child-parent relationship, (2) solidification of a sexual identity, (3) formulation of a personal value system, (4) development of the capacity for true intimacy, and (5) choice of life's work. Graduate school can complicate the completion of these tasks. In the process of gaining needed education and credentials toward doing the chosen life's work, resolution of the child-parent relationship and formulation of a personal value system may be postponed. Students who are ready, even eager, to establish an independent adult

life are restrained from doing so by the necessity of remaining in a dependent relationship in order to complete their studies. In this sense, graduate school tends to prolong behavior characteristic of adolescence.

Students in graduate and professional schools are not ordinarily financially or psychologically independent. While the amenities of student status may permit acceptable living conditions, students typically live below the official poverty level. They are dependent on parents or the university for a substantial proportion of their financial support, and the absence of the academic credential keeps them dependent upon their professors for much needed personal and professional esteem. The need for official approval of their academic efforts creates a potentially stressful power relationship between student and professor. Formulation of a personal and professional value system may be stymied by the need to please or to seem to agree with professors with strong ideas or biases.

The years of early adulthood, ages 18 to 35, are characterized somewhat differently by Havighurst (1972). He has outlined eight developmental tasks which imply a drive for creating a permanent life style by selecting a mate, learning to live with a marriage partner, starting a family, rearing children, managing a home, getting started in an occupation, taking on civic responsibility, and finding a congenial social group. For the reasons already stated many graduate students find it necessary to postpone most or all of these tasks because of their pre-eminent need to complete their education, a necessary prerequisite for completion of such tasks as getting started in an occupation and taking on civic responsibility.

Role Conflicts

Many roles are filled simultaneously by graduate students. In such a situation role conflict is likely to arise. There is simply not enough time to satisfactorily fulfill the demands of a graduate student/teaching assistant/parent/spouse/dissertation writer/homemaker/breadwinner.

Various responses to such stresses have been noted. Some students withdraw while others become aggressive (Booth & Crisler, 1976). Women may divorce their husbands in order to be able to increase their commitment to the student role (Feldman, 1973). A fairly common response among medical students is hypochondria, the adoption of the symptoms of whatever disease is currently under study (Woods, Natterson, & Silverman, 1966).

ACADEMIC PROBLEMS

The largeness of the university tends to keep faculty isolated from students, and student-faculty relationships are sometimes reported by graduate students to be unsatisfactory. The desire for colleagiality is countered by the respect of the professor who can have a profound influence (for good or bad) on the student's future. Faculty are so far removed from the student experience that Carr (1971) found that faculty sponsors of graduate students estimated fewer problems for their students than actually existed and least often identified the most commonly reported problems.

Doctoral committee members fly off to Europe for semesters, orals are continually postponed on short notice, and people find ideological opponents on their thesis committees (Lozoff, 1976). At times, a

carefully written proposal is abandoned because another dissertation on the topic at another school is published first. Perceived bureaucracy of education drives students to distraction, occasionally to suicidal thoughts. Scholarly demands can be equally infuriating. Students doing field work for dissertations may find that it was the reading in or teaching of their academic area which they enjoyed, not the actual research activity of the professional in the field. When disillusionment and despair result, faculty members are seldom available in the field for consultation and support.

By the time the dissertation stage is reached, a student may have lost interest in the field. Yet, changing careers is extremely difficult after years of graduate study in a highly specialized area of an arcane field. Further, faculty members are usually not able or willing to discuss career opportunities with those whom they perceive as "drop-outs." Students often do not have the impression that anyone in the university knows or cares.

Some problems of a personal nature arise from the academic nature of the university. Because graduate education is divided into numerous subspecialties, students have a severely restricted circle of possible acquaintances. Students tend to "live" in their departments, and propinquity dictates that resulting friendships will be among students in the same department. There is often no time or opportunity to look outside the immediately available group for friendships and social activities. The time commitment required to earn a graduate or professional degree in two or three years will cause many students to decide not to make any investment of time in "temporary" friendships. Loneliness often results.

STUDENT PERSONNEL SERVICES

Student personnel work as a professional endeavor began when faculty members delegated their responsibilities for student development to others. There is a need for a unified approach to the problems of graduate students. The literature articulates the fragmentation of graduate studies and the isolation of graduate students in their respective academic fields. Medical, legal, and educational researchers tend to perceive similar problems among their students, and they tend to find development of the same coping mechanisms. Yet, because they do not read each other's journals, faculty from various disciplines do not have access to all available information.

Student personnel workers could communicate to graduate and professional students that someone in the university does know and care about them. However, several recent dissertations (Dorsett, 1969; McIvor, 1970; Treckel, 1974) have surveyed student views of the student personnel services on their campuses, and in each study students were dissatisfied with those services. In some cases, the students were not even aware of their existence.

DISCUSSION

Many things can be done to improve student services for graduate and professional students. Halleck (1976, pp. 175-176) has suggested seven considerations: (a) sufficient financial support through teaching, research, or service assistantships; (b) enough flexibility to encourage exploration of areas outside chosen subspecialties; (c) comprehensive orientation programs and accompanying social activities; (d) adequate choice of community and campus housing with emphasis on

apartments; (e) adequate counseling services with emphasis on marital counseling and family therapy; (f) special programs to enable foreign students to adjust to and to be accepted in American society; and (g) at least one counselor on each campus, preferably middle-aged, having special understanding of and empathy for older students. To this ample list can be added one more requirement: (h) occasional in-service training for student personnel workers to sensitize them to the needs and problems of graduate and professional students.

Halleck's first two proposals are in areas traditionally reserved for the academic departments, but student personnel professionals in such areas as financial aids, psychological counseling, and academic advising are in a position to make recommendations.

The other suggestions fall directly within the functional areas of student personnel. Some can be implemented at low cost while others would require considerable expense. Though high cost programs may be impractical at this time, it is useful to examine some briefly. Extensive renovation of residence halls now made up of corridors double-loaded with single rooms could yield on-campus apartments more conducive to the life style of an independent adult. It would be necessary to provide facilities such as meeting rooms, party rooms, snack bars, and libraries or reading rooms so that the residents could also participate in student oriented activities. A way of similarly serving the needs of all graduate students would be to have a special building or section of a building as a designated graduate student club. Such a facility would provide facilities similar to those discussed above. Staffing could include part- or full-time administrators, program directors, and custodians.

A more realistic set of proposals would require a minimal expenditure of funds. Special orientation activities would require a great deal of coordination and cooperation between departments. Administrators, such as the president, the chancellor or provost, and various deans and directors, would already be busy coping with the much larger crowds of new undergraduates. They would have to be convinced to make an additional commitment to welcoming and informing new graduate students. Yet, it is through orientation meetings and activities that new students could meet each other, find out which services are available to them, and discover the social opportunities that exist before they disappeared into their departments. It is through such exposure that administrators can indicate that someone in the university does care.

Special activities for only graduate students can be scheduled. Academic mixers can give students a social opportunity to meet their departmental colleagues in a relaxed atmosphere. Special tours of libraries, galleries, campus areas, night spots, and recreational areas can be planned.

Counseling services can probably be easily expanded or improved to meet graduate student needs if there is sufficient funding available, as is the case with other proposals mentioned. Special programs for all non-traditional graduate students, whether Black, Chicano, female, married, or older, are all attempted now to a limited extent. The knowledge exists to provide services to foreign students, and such services are being provided on all major campuses to some extent.

Some programs would entail more expenditure of time than of money. One such program for female medical students was reported by Hilberman, Perez-Reyes, and Scagnelli (1975). First year students were organized into small support groups facilitated by two female physicians who also acted as role models. No task was imposed. Instead, the groups

met regularly to give the women the opportunity to vent their feelings, explore ideas, and develop female friendships. The groups persisted for the full year and were seen as successful by participants. Such a reference group concept could be adapted to many different academic settings.

Similarly, departmental student groups can meet to exchange ideas and information, to provide peer advising on academic matters, and to give students the opportunity to meet each other. Housing groups can provide social activities for non-resident graduate students and thereby improve their financial condition by charging admission.

Student personnel services tend to be invisible as far as graduate students are concerned. Outreach programs are essential to inform these potential clients of their services. One method could be a traveling "Lucy booth" taken from classroom building to classroom building and staffed by representatives of various student service agencies. Such a program, already used at one school successfully with undergraduate students (The Lucy booth, 1976), would inform graduate students of the availability of services not otherwise known to them. Colorful signs and stacks of free pamphlets would be sufficient to attract attention.

In some cases graduate and professional students have developed their own activities to meet their needs. Many researchers (e.g., Hughes, Becker, & Geer, 1962) have noted graduate and professional students come together to devise coping strategies such as study groups, modi vivendi for dealing with the faculty, lists of "loopholes," and mutual support groups. Reuss (1974) reports examples of whimsical responses such as spurious bibliographies and fake journals. Student personnel workers in such settings as counseling services, residence halls, and graduate student centers could provide consultation and facilities for such groups.

CONCLUSION

Student personnel administrators must become aware of the needs of graduate students. Institutions which make a great investment in graduate education need to make a similar investment in services to meet the needs of their graduate students. Because of the tendency of graduate students to be isolated in their departments, it is necessary to create outreach programs to make graduate students aware of services. It is also necessary to acquaint faculty members with common problems of graduate students and the university services which can help students to cope with their problems.

The initial step in any program of increased services to graduate and professional students should be in-service training for student service personnel to acquaint them with the current research on graduate students, the types of problems which graduate students experience, the needs of graduate students and other young adults, and the types of programs that have been effective or which can be adapted to graduate student services. Once this is done, a commitment to adequate services for graduate and professional students can be operationalized.

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Confidentiality in Educational Counseling

by William E. Briegel

Within the education field today, from elementary education to higher education, the administrator and counselor are presented with a delicate issue that must be dealt with as well as understood in depth. That issue is the problem of confidential communication. Further complicating the issue is the difficulty of determining professional capacity and obligation which enable the question to be handled legally in a defensible manner. The purpose of this paper is to examine these issues as they relate to the college student personnel administrator.

Several professions have legal authority to conduct their affairs under the protection of confidential client-professional communication. Within this group are doctors, lawyers, and clergy. All are immune from legal prosecution for refusal to disclose to the authorities privileged communication. At present in our society, journalists and educators are questioning whether this can be applied to them.

The confidentiality controversy can be seen as a very broad issue in education. Weirick (1974) suggests that whenever there is conflict or dissonance between a student's right to privacy and the institution's need for information, the issue of confidentiality is introduced. The student's rights extend to broad areas such as records, admissions information, and financial aids. Definitive legal guidelines are more visible in these areas due to the attention directed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 to written information, yet the verbal communication between student and institution remains a distinctly separate area, seemingly undealt with by legislation.

Confidentiality is essential for open exchange between student and counselor. In order for students to disclose personal information about themselves, they must first be able to relax with an assurance that they are not exposing their sensitive problems to the world at large. Since the satisfactory resolution of a student's problem is the primary interest of an educational counselor, some degree of confidentiality must be established. This guarantee, however, cannot be given carte blanche.

A comparison between educational administration and the already sanctioned professions should be made. DeBlassie (1976) establishes three conditions that he believes validate any claim to professional status of a confidentially privileged group:

> (a) There must be one who is legally a lawyer, doctor or minister; (b) at the time the communication in question was made, the lawyer, doctor or minister must have been acting in a professional capacity; (c) the person making the communication, if in possession of his or her faculties, must have regarded the professional person as his or her doctor, lawyer or minister (p. 523).

In conjunction with these conditions, Oelrich (1974) suggests that a dilemma may exist for the school administrator who might normally be seen as protected. He points out that while some states have adapted laws extending the testimonial privilege of confidentiality to certified "psychologists," it is uncertain as to whether this protection applies to school counselors.

Others contend that the counselor should have no protection due to the difference in situation. Weirick (1974) makes this quite clear by stating her perceived differences:

> The relationship between a student and his guidance counselor is often likened to that of a patient to his doctor or a client to his lawyer. This analogy, however, has two important drawbacks. The doctor and lawyer are not subject to a higher authority--the guidance counselor is responsible to other members of the administration. The patient and the client are paying bills for the services rendered. The student is responsible to his parents who pay the school taxes which provide the counselor's salary (p. 14).

Several objections to Weirick's position can be raised. First, not all school administrators are subject to an absolute higher authority; their priorities may very well be student-based. Second, with the 18 year-old aged majority, very few students are legally responsible to their parents, and fewer are totally unresponsible for some financial contributions to their education. Third, it would appear that if the two drawbacks are seen as valid, it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, for the student development model to be operable, since the student is to be seen as a second class citizen and subject to the authority of the educational institution and its administrators. The elimination of a student's responsibility, in terms of his or her own ability to seek help and direction, is to retard the student's personal development. Such a situation would beg the question why there are student personnel services on a college campus.

The confusing and conflicting opinions on the status of confidentiality in educational counseling are reflected in the findings of a 1968 survey of the state legislatures and their actions on privileged communication. These studies indicated that only two states, Michigan and Indiana, provided legal protection of the right of counselors to refuse to divulge confidential information when testifying in court (Litwack, 1975, p. 195). The Indiana statute was amended in 1976 and reads as follows:

> Immunity of Counselors. A school counselor is immune from disclosing privileged or confidential communication made to him by a counselee as a student. The matters communicated are privileged and protected against disclosure (I.C.A. 20-6.1-6-15).

Litwack (1975) also notes that in the early 1970's eighteen states had some form of full or partial coverage in the area of privileged communication (p. 195). Five states, including New York, had been unable to pass such legislation with it either delayed in committee or vetoed by the governor, while fifteen states had no statute under consideration. To further compound the problem, Litwack points out that no central clearinghouse or professional organization keeps track of the status of each state's legislation or engages in any organized attempt to provide lobbying input.

Even though it is assumed that the educational counselor and administrator desire to have legally protected lines of communication, it should not be assumed that the counselor or administrator would or should invoke this privilege in all communications. Simply having the legal right to refuse to divulge information under threat of prosecution is certainly not the same as conducting all counseling under such a cloak of secrecy.

Several authors are quick to point out that many members of the educational counseling field already operate with conscious attitudes toward this issue:

> In the absence of statutory law, the courts have the right to create testimonial privilege. Or the counselor may fall back on his ethical commitment of confidentiality. As Robert Geiser and Paul Rheingold point out, "In matters of conscience many courts are hesitant to force witnesses to testify" (Thro, 1973, p. 415).

Yet, the uncertainty of the law and the possible variance from state to state and even court to court contribute to the administrator or counselor occupying a precarious position in dealing with confidential communications. Given this state of affairs, the educational administrator and counselor may adopt a two-fold approach to securing the ability to adequately perform their jobs.

As a policy of the educational counseling and administrative professions, organized lobbying and pressure must be exerted within the political process in order to insure action by the various state legislatures, and to attempt to gather support for federal legislation. This political action could and should be done in conjunction with other professional education groups. Another alternative is to raise the issue with a test case in court, but this could have various unpleasant effects for the participants and could affect the decisions of legislative bodies.

On an individual level, administrators or counselors should take it upon themselves to investigate whether their own particular educational institutions have an available legal staff and consult them regarding this issue. To carry this one step further, administrators could seek the advice of local or state judiciary when difficult situations are anticipated and when weighing the ethics of a particular student's problem. Such a consultation would be acceptable as long as the student remains unidentified and information is not transmitted that could lead the authorities to a particular individual.

The second level of preparedness concerns a development of personal standards to be established in advance of any application of confidentiality to a given student's situation. These guidelines

should be flexible, but the approach to controversial student conduct should be consistent. The key question becomes: At what point is the counselor obligated to break any confidence that he may have offered? Two instances are almost uniformly accepted:

> First, where the information indicates the student might harm himself or another person, proper authorities should be informed. Second, if the information indicates that a crime might be committed and the student cannot be dissuaded certain authorities may need to be notified (Walden & St. John, 1976, p. 87).

Given these two instances, when it is generally acceptable to break confidence, other instances become matters of personal discretion.

Some mention of this selective confidence should be made to the student before a counseling session begins. Statements such as, "I cannot promise you absolute privilege concerning matters dangerous to the school or yourself, but I can assure you that an attempt to facilitate this matter will be made with the utmost confidentiality," can be used to engender trust, yet honestly inform the student of the counselor's position.

There is another aspect of professional confidence and privilege that should be noted although it is often overlooked. Educational administrators must also become aware of their obligations and potential liabilities when informing clients of their responsibilities. Far too often, administrators are reluctant to speak in an official capacity, yet this need not be the case, as Walden (1974) notes:

> There are circumstances in which a school administrator acting in his official capacity, can speak candidly and honestly without undue fear of being subsequently charged with liability for defamation of character.
>
> Key points to remember in such cases are the context in which the official made his statements and his underlying motivation when he spoke. If an administrator is to avoid liability, it is critical that he be acting in his official capacity at the time he made any statements alleged to be slanderous. It is also important that his words be spoken without any evidence of underlying malice or intent to do injury (p. 47).

The problem of confidential communication cannot be separated from the general conflict between the individual's right to privacy and the institution's right to know. The problem can also be seen as reflective of a general societal trend of increased awareness of personal privacy and institutional abuses. It should also be realized that the solution to such problems must encompass all the related issues.

The status of confidential communication among college administrators and counselors is somewhat confusing. The absence of a uniform national policy and the strength of arguments by members of the profession underscore the need for definitive legislative action and continuing personal concern and caution on the part of student personnel administrators.

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About the Authors...

William E. Briegel will receive his M.S. Ed. degree in August. He graduated from Purdue University with a degree in philosophy. Before coming to Indiana University, he worked for two years in Student Services at Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne. William is a native Hoosier.

Sara Green will graduate in May with a master's degree in College Student Personnel Administration. Sara earned her B.A. from Purdue University in library science and spent a year as a secondary media specialist before entering Indiana University. She is currently in her second year of intern experience in the Office of Continuing Education for Women, School of Continuing Studies, with additional practicum experience in Scholarships and Financial Aid, and the Office of the Dean for Student Services, Judicial Affairs.

Marc A. Kaplan will receive his M.S. Ed. in May. Following completion of his A.B. in history at Indiana University, he attended the University of Iowa College of Law. There he made a mid-program career change, returned to Indiana University to work full-time in the residence halls, and entered the College Student Personnel Administration program. Marc has interned in the halls and is currently doing practicum work in the Business Placement Office and the Office of the Dean for Student Services, Judicial Affairs.

Anthony Zizos will receive his M.S. Ed. this May in College Student Personnel Administration. Following his graduation from Widener College with a degree in history, Anthony gained experience in both housing and food services before coming to Indiana University. He is currently in his second year of internship experience in the Department of Residence Life. Anthony also held a practicum in Halls of Residence and served last summer at the University of South Florida as an ACUHO intern. He also has had experience with computer systems.

News from 226

The happy news from 226 is the marriage between Dr. George Kuh and Dr. Martha McCarthy (School Administration), December 17. To congratulate them, special recognition was given them at the December 11th Christmas party. We all wish them happiness.

We also wish Dr. David DeCoster the best of luck in his new job as Dean of Students at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska. He will be missed!

This is the time of year when concerns for placement are foremost: summer internships, 1978-1979 internships, and the first jobs for our graduates. Many thanks to the alumni who keep us in mind as they need staff or hear of positions. We have placed 3 new students in off-campus internships this semester. We also have 50 students working in 22 offices on campus this semester. A first this semester is a new seminar, Developing Skills for Administration. Limited to 18 persons, topics are dealing with issues that our alumni evaluations indicated were needed.

Again, many thanks to those who have sent us money for the IUSPA JOURNAL. It is much appreciated and you see the results here. JUST AN IDEA: If every graduate the first year out would send us $10.00, we'd make it!

Faculty look forward to seeing you all at conventions. Dr. Kuh and Dr. "G" will be at ACPA and NASPA, Dr. "G" at NAWDAC, and Dr. Shaffer at AAHE, ACPA and NASPA.

See you all soon. Watch for the I.U. social hour at ACPA, Monday evening, and the NAWDAC dinner on Thursday evening.

Dr. "G"

Candidates for Placement

CSPA - 1978

ANDERSON, MARY ELLEN (CLARK): B.S., Indiana University - Secondary Education, English, and M.S., Indiana University - Combined program in College Student Personnel Administration and Counseling and Guidance; Internship: I.U. Residence Life, Leysin School in Leysin, Switzerland; Practica: University Division, Independent Studies of Continuing Education; Work experience: Full-time work at Leysin School, Leysin, Switzerland, and in Indiana public schools.

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DI PRIMA, MARIA: B.S., Loyola University of Chicago - Psychology, and M.S., Indiana University - College Student Personnel Administration; Summer Internship: Triton Community College; Practica: College Union, Union Board; Work experience: I.U. Residence Life.

FARBER, SHELLY: B.A., University of Arizona - Speech Communications, and M.S., Indiana University - College Student Personnel Administration; Practica: Student Activities, Conference Bureau.

GLAZER, GARY: A.B., Indiana University - Popular Culture and Folklore, and M.S., Indiana University - College Student Personnel Administration; Practicum: University Division - Admissions; Work experience: Assistant Manager - I.U. Student Union; Salesman; Veterans Administration; Manager.

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ZIZOS, ANTHONY: B.A., Widener College - History, and M.S., Indiana University - College Student Personnel Administration; Internship: I.U. Residence Life, and Association of College and University Housing Offices internship at University of South Florida, Tampa; Practicum: I.U. Halls of Residence; Academic minor (10 semester hours) in Computer Science; Work experience: Assistant Manager of Catering, SAGA Food Service, and Coordinator of Summer Housing and Special Events, Widener College.

Placement of Recent Graduates

Lisa Clevenger ('77) is employed in the Dean of Student Services Office, I.U. East - Richmond.

John Edward Dickhaut ('77) - Assistant to the Director of Student Activities, Marquette University.

Jeanne Hunt ('76) - Coordinator, Ann Arbor Women's Crisis Center, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

John Manson ('77) - an Assistant Director in Continuing Education, IUPUI, Indianapolis.

Robert Pitman ('77) - Director of Non-Traditional Student Services, Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas.

Nicki Myers-Jones ('77) is teaching at Walbrook High School in Philadelphia. (Address: 1F Phlox Circle, Owings Mills, Maryland 21117)

Alumni Notes

Diane Osele Donovan is Coordinator of Regional Campus Financial Aids, Miami University

Dr. Bill Geller is now Vice President for Student Affairs, University of Maine, Farmington.

Dr. Kurt Hoffman, Vice President of Student Affairs, West Virginia State University.

Mary Kelly was accepted to the position as an Assistant Director for the Division of Public Service in I.U.'s School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

Vivian O'Hara, Associate Director of Student Services, University of Wisconsin, Washington County, West Bend, Wisconsin.

Linda Sexton-Patrick, Director of the Adult Career Resources Center, Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills, Illinois.

Nancy Sullivan is working with I.B.M.

Contributors

Many thanks go to the following individuals for their most generous contributions to the IUSPA Journal fund. Without their help, this issue of the journal would not have been possible.

Rebecca Drury
Barbara A. Elsbury
Dann Lobsinger
Keith Patrick and Linda Sexton-Patrick
Willene Paxton
David Praether
Brenda Zagorac

If there is anyone we have omitted, let us know. We will be more than happy to acknowledge your contribution.

Convention Notes

ACPA Social - Monday, March 13 from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. in the Nicolet Rooms - A and B.

NAWDAC - Alumni Dinner, Thursday, March 31 at 5:30. Send reservation to Dr. "G".

Since the Hotel was the only place within reasonable distance for us to have dinner, we have reserved a room there and made arrangements for a sirloin tip dinner.

NASPA - See Dr. Shaffer!

Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Indiana University Student Personnel Association, to bring you warm greetings from Indiana University and the Department of College Student Personnel Administration. All of us who are currently in the program are active in numerous and diverse areas of the university and are gaining much from these experiences.

During this year, I.U.S.P.A. has been able to complement our academic and practical work with items of professional interest as well as more relaxing social events. Since our last communication with you, we shared the joy of the holiday season by gathering at Dr. Greenleaf's before leaving for a well-deserved and much-needed vacation.

Since the beginning of second semester, I.U.S.P.A. has, under its new officers, begun focusing attention on the upcoming conventions. Our January meeting concerned the details of choosing, attending, and perhaps participating in one or more conventions. On February 7, we were pleased to have on campus Dr. Robert D. Brown, who agreed to present to us some of his recent research regarding the "Student Development Transcript." Toward the end of February, we sponsored a program especially for those who will be going through placement at any of the conventions. This session involved role-playing, discussion, and critique, all of which are aimed at developing interviewing skills and poise. March and early April will be taken up with conventions. We hope to see many of you in Detroit or Kansas City; please greet us and feel free to share with us your experiences both at Indiana and in your professional work. Before the semester ends in early May, we plan to usher in the new executives and bid farewell to the people who are leaving Indiana.

As you can see, I.U.S.P.A. has been functioning well and is eager to serve the ambitious and talented people in the C.S.P.A. program. Although our membership is higher than in the past, we sincerely hope that even more students will see the value and benefit of association with this professional student organization. We extend much gratitude to those who have contributed their time and effort to I.U.S.P.A. in numerous capacities during this past school year.

We wish to thank especially our alumni, who have supported us in many ways, not the least of which being financial contributions toward the publication of this journal. We challenge others of you to consider this type of investment in the maintenance of such professional opportunities for us, your future colleagues. We will always welcome your encouragement and support in both our professional and our personal development.

Warm regards,

Ruth B. Kerstenof

President, I.U. Student
Personnel Association