

The following proposal will be submitted to the Faculty of Yale College by President Brewster at the meeting on February 18. 1965

FIVE YEAR B.A. EXPERIMENT

BACKGROUND

Following my inauguration last April, I elaborated to the faculties of Yale College and the Graduate School some implications of my remarks with respect to possible experimental departures from conventional academic sequences and programs. Among the possibilities justifying experimentation I mentioned three. First was a programmed interruption of the unbroken academic sequence, not by way of escape from expectations, but for its value in the development of character and motivation. Another was the hope that we might experiment with ways of guiding students to attain sophistication in a field by means other than course election. A third was the possibility that the B.A. might be restored as a terminal degree sufficient to prepare some able people for careers of public significance without need for spending years in graduate programs designed properly for those who plan to be scholars or to practice one or another of the learned professions.

Discussions with visiting committees, academic deans, individual faculty members, students, and selected people in public and corporate life have led me to fashion a proposal for preliminary discussion with John Gardner and Alan Pifer of the Carnegie Corporation. On the basis of these discussions Yale has been invited to submit a formal proposal to the Carnegie Corporation.

Before submitting such a proposal I want to be sure that the line I would pursue has the support, or at least acquiescence, of a substantial

majority of the College faculty; and is not strenuously objected to by any substantial number of faculty members. Obviously the experimental nature of the proposal and its incompleteness in detail would mean that any grant in its support would afford a broad discretion in carrying it out. Any new degree granting programs or new courses would of course be put into effect only after their approval by the faculty on recommendation of its Course of Study Committee. However, even at this initial stage, faculty approval in principle seems in order since the outlines of a program are considerably more definite now than they were when I sought preliminary faculty approval last spring.

PROPOSED EXPERIMENTAL SEQUENCE

An opportunity would be offered for twelve students to spend the year following their sophomore year in a cultural environment which contrasts sharply with any developed western society. The purpose would not be formal study. It would not be primarily to become sophisticated, let alone expert, in the history or social structure or affairs of the country of residence. It would be, rather, to develop an intimate awareness of the extent to which values, expectations, standards of living and ways of life can be totally different from what the American student has inherited and experienced. Living and working by indigenous standards in a less developed part of Asia, Africa, and Latin America would be designed to afford this exposure.

Preliminary selection of these students might have to begin before the end of freshman year in order to permit the use of the following summer and possibly the choice of sophomore electives to be planned in order to make the year away as profitable as possible. Final selection would not take place

until the middle of sophomore year. One element in selection would be the initiative, ingenuity, and judgment demonstrated in the student's own proposed plan for the year away.

Upon return the twelve students would be under the program guidance of a faculty member and facilities would be provided so that the group could meet together from time to time. Each student would carry a program of six courses designed to provide a coherent sequence over the two years after his return. Although the courses might be confined to a single department, it would be expected that they might also span several departments. The attempt would be to design a sequence for each student which would provide an understanding of those disciplines and methodologies most relevant to a career of public or private executive responsibility. It might be expected that the core of the two year curriculum would often be in those social sciences which bear on public affairs.

Instead of relying upon examined elective courses to provide breadth, the two years after return from abroad would include two tutored self education programs each year. Depending upon what fields of learning were lacking in the student's curricular background, he would be afforded tutorial guidance in the use of readings and lectures in order to gain acquaintance with a field. Hopefully the tutor could be drawn from the fellowship of the student's college of residence. In almost all cases some such self-educated exposure to fields outside the curricular sequence would include fields in history, the arts, or letters and the natural sciences.

Upon graduation, participants in this program would receive a B.A. and unless their original intentions were modified, would seek to begin careers in public or private callings immediately upon graduation.

In order to offset the possible disadvantage of not having the credentials of a graduate or professional degree, participants who successfully completed this program might be told that they could return to Yale as special students for such work and study as they might feel helpful from time to time anytime during the ten years after graduation, depending upon developments of new fields of knowledge or changes in the level and scope of their own responsibilities which might make renewed study desirable.

ARGUMENT

The proposal attempts to make some modest experimental start on four areas where it seems to me American university education has cause for concern.

First is the uneasy sense that the unbroken prospect of competitively driven, conventional, academic achievement from age five to twenty five breaks the motivation of many of the most highly motivated and dulls the intellectual enthusiasm of some of the most intelligent.

Second, is the belief that despite the sharp contrasts which a small world holds, we do little to develop a healthy tolerance of strangeness and a healthy impatience with complacency. We risk both an unrealism and a smugness which is too easily engendered by an exclusively analytical and critical academic development.

Third, is the awareness that we do very little to train people to educate themselves, whereas the exponential rate of growth and change of knowledge makes it certain that this is going to be required increasingly over the lifetime of any person who wants to play an active part in his society.

Fourth, is a feeling that credential grabbing is attenuating the formal education and distorting the motivation of too many of the oncoming generation. Graduate schools are full of people who do not intend to be scholars. Law schools are full of people who do not intend to be lawyers. Business schools are full of people who have no very high regard for business learning but find the school a convenient hiring hall. Neither the schools nor the people in them are to blame, but we might experiment with other alternatives and hope to have some effect if we were successful.

None of the devices incorporated in this proposal are necessarily the only or even the best way to achieve the desired reform. To me they seem plausible. They seem manageable, without disruption of the normal academic activities of Yale College. None of them will be "scientifically" proven or disproven. However, given a small, selected experimental group and an intimate acquaintance with their experience over a period of years, it should be possible to tell whether any part of the experiment as initiated or as modified is worthy of more general application, at Yale or elsewhere.