

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON THE FRESHMAN YEAR

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the Freshman Year*

April 13, 1962

YALE UNIVERSITY
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

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*President A. Whitney Griswold
Yale University*

Dear Mr. President:

I am happy to submit herewith the report of the Committee you appointed last fall to consider the education of first year students in Yale College.

Following your charge, we have tried to consider the first year student in the entire context of Yale's educational life, including his admission to the University.

Although some of our proposals may not be within Yale's present means, we hope that they may set a goal not beyond ultimate feasibility.

We have enjoyed this opportunity for service to Yale and hope that we have made a contribution to its future.

Respectfully,

LEONARD W. DOOB,
Chairman
THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE
ON THE FRESHMAN YEAR

*The Education of First Year Students
in Yale College*

THE CHANGES wrought by time, by developments in scholarship, science, and technology, and by the position now occupied by the United States have imposed new responsibilities upon Yale and a few other comparable universities in this country. As the nations of the world have realized that hope lies in better education, moreover, competition for entrance to colleges and universities has increased. We must reassert, therefore, a readiness to prepare for service in our society the most promising possible candidates we can attract. Yale is no longer an 18th-century academy or a 19th-century college but is a university of the 20th century in one of the great nations. Under these conditions the task of advancing knowledge and of training future scholars must be emphasized.

This change in emphasis does not mean that we should pay less attention to teaching undergraduates but it does imply that we should make more scholarly demands upon them. We must view the whole educational process as a more mature and serious undertaking not only for those students who will join the learned professions, but also for those who will enter business, industry, or government. For the improvement of our national culture, as well as for the good name of Yale, the students we educate should exemplify and radiate the power and grace of learning. More of the graduates of Yale College, we think, must become professional scholars and teachers. It is incumbent upon Yale and similar institutions consciously to increase the number and proportion of learned men in our society. Our analysis of the demands of

the times, and of the special conditions at Yale, persuades us that extensive reforms, some realizable at once and others considerably more distant, should be considered, and in this conviction we make the following proposals.

Our special mandate is to examine the Freshman Year. This part of Yale came into existence as a separate unit at a time when it was thought that the entering freshman required a great deal of attention and care in the transition from school to college and at a time, too, when the existence at Yale of two major undergraduate schools made it advisable to ask the first-year student to delay a year before deciding his future direction. In the words of the University's historian:

. . . In 1919-20, when the Reorganization [of the curriculum] had commanded the setting up of the common Freshman Year, an essential ingredient in that noble experiment had been the creation of an appropriate curriculum, imposed upon all Freshmen while denied in general to Sophomores and upperclassmen. In Dean Angier's hands unity, good teaching, and a safe school-to-college transition had been promoted as much by intellectual as by administrative means. Freshmen were taught in separate classrooms, the subjects of study were limited, and the methods of instruction were more personal and intense. For a time there was even a core or common denominator of subject matter required of everyone. While concessions had to be made to the differences of preparation and destination, specialization had been prohibited, and the inevitable choice between College and Sheff had been deliberately delayed. Throughout the 1920's the self-governing Freshman Faculty had continued to supervise and cultivate this peculiar educational experience, and they taught with such enthusiasm and success that the Freshman Year, which had been established in faculty bitter-

ness, won a tolerant, even a warm consent. (George Wilson Pierson, *Yale: the University College*, pp. 365-66.)

But in succeeding decades most of the reasons for a separate Freshman Year have ceased to exist. As those members of the Freshman Faculty who remained at Yale grew older, their interests changed and their learning increased; they engaged in research and they taught upperclass undergraduates and graduate students. As individuals and as a group they become indistinguishable from the rest of the faculty and finally in 1954 were absorbed into Yale College. By that time, too, the common elements of the freshman curriculum had disappeared and hence responsibility for educational policy was removed from the jurisdiction of the Freshman Year. The tendency for freshmen to take courses at all levels of the College has continued since they now enter Yale with such a great variety of training and interests and since the policy has prevailed of allowing and encouraging them to penetrate the curriculum of the College as far as their abilities allow. Then, too, the improvement of training in secondary schools, the better selection of students admitted to the entering class, and above all the consolidation of the undergraduate schools into one unit have eliminated the reasons for delaying the student's choice of his ultimate program.

From an educational point of view, therefore, the Committee sees no good reason to continue Freshman Year as a separate unit. We hardly need add that in arriving at this conclusion we have not been swayed by any faculty or student criticism of Freshman Year as it now exists. In fact, though we conducted informal and formal surveys of opinions on the subject, we were unable to find that any significant, strident dissatisfaction exists. Our recommendations are directed toward making a good condition better.

Only one major reason has been advanced for the maintenance of the Freshman Year as a separate undergraduate unit: the separate living arrangements for the freshmen, and the elaborate counseling and supervising controls which go with such arrangements, provide a desirable period of transition for the student from school to college. We believe that this need no longer exists, and that separate arrangements for freshmen serve only to retard the progress of the student toward the desired intellectual and social maturity. In the opinion of the Committee, the student in his first year at Yale should feel immediately that his maturity is acknowledged and that he is an active member of a great intellectual enterprise.

For these several reasons the Committee, while recognizing the good services of the Freshman Year in the past but aware, too, that most of its former functions are now being performed elsewhere, recommends that the final steps be taken and that the remaining activities be transferred to Yale College.

Working Assumptions

As a Committee, we were asked by the President not to isolate the first year of undergraduate education from its position in and outside the University but to consider it in its full context as simply one phase of the educational process. We were, therefore, much concerned with the ways in which a freshman class is assembled as well as with the curricula and the experiences which the student will face after his first year. As we addressed ourselves to the total problem, we were guided by principles large enough to give us the perspective from which sound recommendations could be derived and beneficial actions ultimately flow. These principles look toward the future because Yale, like any great institution, is compelled to anticipate future problems even before resolving its pres-

ent ones. All immediate plans, such as the construction of buildings, major changes in the undergraduate curriculum, and an increase in the number of students in the College or the Graduate School, have to be considered in the light of the educational policy of the University. We have tried, therefore, to plan for the future as best we could without too much concern for the important problems that presently beset us.

Being deeply involved in the going affairs of the University, however, we have had to temper our ambitions and to be content with making progress a step at a time. In this report, consequently, we draw a clear distinction between *ultimate* and *immediate* recommendations. In ultimate proposals we define goals that should be envisioned now, but for good reasons, usually financial, cannot be achieved for some time. In immediate proposals we recommend changes that seem feasible at once, or in the very near future. We are keenly aware that "ideal" proposals are easily forgotten or ignored if they cannot be put into action, at least in part, very soon; and yet we have not made detailed suggestions concerning our proposals because most of them, we think, require the careful planning of special implementing committees.

ADMISSIONS

Policy

The policies that guide our Board of Admissions are the results of long traditions, manifold pressures, and the experience and conscientious administration of the directors. These policies cannot and should not be drastically altered, but a change in emphasis is recommended. Now, more than ever before in its history, Yale should consciously aim to attract students of intellectual distinction. Special consideration should be given to those can-

didates who by their school records, entrance examinations, and other evidence demonstrate powerful intellectual interests and capacities. As long ago as May, 1946, a policy of admissions was formulated which affirmed that students of outstanding intellectual capacity shall be given first preference. The Committee recommends that a more explicit and comprehensive directive to the same effect be developed for the continuing guidance of those engaged in the admissions process.

As the number of students seeking entrance to Yale increases and their preparation for college work constantly improves, we shall be in an increasingly favorable position to supply the creative scholarship at the undergraduate stage which the country so urgently needs. Already a considerable and increasing majority of our students go on after graduation from college to further graduate training and thence into professional careers. The process must be furthered by the discovery and recruitment of talent at the beginning. Such an objective can best be achieved, we think, in two ways:

1. Candidates whose records show exceptionally high promise of continuing intellectual achievement should be sought out and admitted without regard for any other criteria save those indicative of emotional maturity and good character.

2. All other applicants for admission should be considered in the light of the fact that Yale is first and foremost an intellectual enterprise and that, consequently, those being educated here must be equipped with intellectual powers equal to the demands of the educational process at every stage. These students should show evidence of possessing intellectual curiosity, imagination, creative ability, inventiveness, and other qualities of mind and person that are less readily revealed and less accurately measured by formal academic tests than is the capacity for purely formal scholastic achievement.

Role of the Faculty

The faculty is the one group at any institution of learning that has the primary responsibility for the development and operation of educational policy. It is highly necessary, we think, that the Yale College faculty be much more deeply concerned than at present with the total process of recruitment and admission. As matters now stand, the faculty reserves the right to complain but does not sufficiently work at the process of recruiting or selection. The Committee recommends that the President, in consultation with the Dean of Yale College, annually appoint members of the faculty to the Committee on Admissions. In order to be able to assist the Dean of Admissions in all phases of the process of assembling a class—travel, selection, communicating the policies of admissions to the schools, and other pertinent matters—they should be relieved of a part of their teaching assignments temporarily or in some other way be compensated for the hard work which their membership will entail.

Financial Assistance by Yale University

The Committee deplores the fact that some students of the highest intellectual potential decide not to come to Yale because of our present policy of demanding that all students on scholarship shall earn part of their expenses by a job, or in some cases take a loan. The system of mandatory bursary work, moreover, brings hardship to some students, especially those who are promising but at the outset less well prepared, for it may prevent them from making the most of their educational experience at Yale. For these reasons we think our policy should be modified in two respects. First, a limited number of prize scholarships that require no work should be offered to exceptionally promising students in the middle or at the end of their freshman year when the faculty has had the

opportunity to assess them on the campus and in accordance with our own standards. If, after a trial period, this plan does not appear to meet its objectives, consideration should be given to awarding a limited number of prize scholarships to incoming freshmen. Then, secondly, all bursary work should be optional. An entering student who qualifies would be offered one of our scholarships or loans, or both, and no other demand would be placed upon him; but, if he seeks a larger stipend from Yale, he would then voluntarily take a bursary job. Consistent with its original purpose and as far as is financially possible, the bursary system, we believe, should offer job opportunities related to a student's intellectual development. In making these proposals we are concerned not only with the individual students but also with Yale's reputation as a place that honors intellectual achievement.

Admission of Women

Ultimately, we believe, Yale should concern itself with the education of women at the undergraduate stage. In the young women of the nation we have a huge supply of talent for which our educational institutions have insufficiently provided, and our country has imperfectly utilized. We think Yale has a national duty, as well as a duty to itself, to provide the rigorous training for women that we supply for men, and we recommend that the University keep in its view for ultimate adoption the entrance of women to the freshman class. Two qualifications seem to us important: first, women should not be admitted on a token basis but as a substantial proportion of each class; secondly, there should be no reduction in the number of men admitted to Yale College. We make this long-range recommendation mindful of the many and expensive requirements the admission of women will impose upon the University.

THE CURRICULUM

It has been asserted that our curriculum in the first year is difficult for many students and that this fact is well known in the secondary schools. The difficulty is said to come from a number of circumstances: from the fact that we demand five courses rather than four; from the distributional and other requirements which the students must begin to satisfy; from the small size of many classes which expect active and steady participation rather than passive listening to lectures. The fact and the reputation of toughness are both highly desirable, we think, and we would have no lessening of our standards in these respects.

There are other aspects of our curriculum that seem to us good. The present policy of granting advanced college placement and credit for excellent work in secondary school and on examination is wise, and should be allowed to grow naturally. These devices for securing the progress and the interest of the well prepared student will not, however, relieve the condition of the inadequately prepared student. But in both cases, we are of the opinion that the advantage of five courses each year, allowing the student to explore new areas of knowledge or probe more deeply into familiar ones, outweighs by a considerable margin any advantages in the four-course plan. At the same time we believe that a principle of flexibility should prevail, and flexibility is not difficult to secure at Yale where rich resources are provided for undergraduates. Gifted students who arrive at the University with a passionate interest in a particular field or subject already developed should be able to pursue their interests without delay. Such students, never very numerous perhaps, should be allowed to go far with their specialization or major before they have completed their general education. The present Advanced Placement and

Advanced Credit programs are pointing in this direction, but in individual cases more freedom will have to be allowed.

The first year at Yale is difficult for some students, but it is sometimes unexciting for others. It must be our aim to quicken the intellectual interests of all freshmen. Many of them begin the study of a subject which they have not previously encountered in school, such subjects, for example, as anthropology or philosophy. We recommend that measures be taken to ensure that all first-year students be given such a new experience in their studies. Further, if the administrative changes we propose later in this report are adopted, we propose that freshmen be allowed a higher priority than at present as candidates for admission to sophomore discussion courses in the colleges. We wish, also, that every student could have what we can only call a creative experience, though this term is an easy victim of misunderstanding and possibly ridicule. That experience might come from one of his courses when he feels impelled to undertake extra work or to write a paper which stretches his capacity; it might occasionally come from a special interest in his bursary job; it has frequently come in a summer activity, such as an apprenticeship to a senator in Washington, or a journey to Russia to obtain material for an essay. The experience can only with difficulty be foreseen and arranged, but we ought to do all we can to make the miracle of aroused interest more likely.

We hold and reaffirm very strongly the principle that first year students should have access to first rate minds and distinguished teachers. The Committee is convinced that in many subjects there is no automatic correlation between the size of a class and the quality and success of the instruction. It would be desirable, we think, to examine anew the traditional practice of having only small classes in many of the subjects we teach.

Intellectual Orientation

Associated generally with the idea of the creative experience is our strong feeling that the present arrangements for orienting the freshmen at the beginning of their sojourn at Yale overemphasize non-intellectual matters and hence are in need of drastic revision. Specific suggestions for general orientation we shall mention later in this report. Here we would state our conviction that the process of orientation can be made more intellectually significant and generally profitable for the freshmen and stimulating for the faculty. We recommend that a small experimental program be instituted to see if a better solution of this problem may not be found. It might be possible to acquaint the freshmen over some weeks with the great fields of knowledge which they may pursue in their college career, and to have the most distinguished scholars in the University introduce them to these areas. We could, at any rate, make it clear to them that they must master some of the preliminary studies if they hope to pursue certain intellectual interests at a later point in their career. A case in point is mathematics: upperclassmen acquiring a late interest in a science often find themselves disqualified because as freshmen they failed to take a course in mathematics. At the outset, then, students should somehow be made more effectively aware of such possibilities. We must also continually scan our basic courses to make sure that they are being taught in an attractive and meaningful manner.

Relation of College to Graduate Training

Without question the experience of a liberal arts education at the undergraduate stage should be carefully preserved. A college education should not be a transitional four years between expanding secondary schools and demanding graduate or professional schools. It pro-

vides an almost unique opportunity for the individual to acquire a breadth of knowledge, a degree of mastery in one subject or field, and the attitudes and habits of mind which will enable him to see things in perspective, to understand and evaluate, and often to solve a wide variety of elusive intellectual, social, and emotional problems. At the same time we can improve undergraduate education by the careful introduction of more graduate training, in all its seriousness and rigor, into the undergraduate curriculum. In line with this, we recommend that it be made possible for the thoroughly well qualified student to obtain the bachelor's degree and the master's degree at the end of four years. A student thus taking some graduate work in his major field would qualify for credit in the graduate school. Such a development would allow the University to examine the student for his degree, in contrast to the piecemeal course examinations and the departmental examination which he now takes. An arrangement of this kind would provide greater continuity between college and graduate school for a very select group.

ADMINISTRATION

Earlier in this report we stated our conviction that freshmen and hence the Freshman Year should be fully integrated with the administration as well as with the life of Yale College. At this point we propose both an ultimate and an immediate plan for assuming and deepening the responsibilities which the College has for freshmen. We are more impressed by the likenesses of the freshmen to the rest of the undergraduates than we are by their differences. There seems to us no good reason for delaying their assimilation into the student body of the College; on the contrary, we think that from the outset they should begin to participate as full-fledged members of the community in all respects. Less care than

in the past need be taken of their social and emotional life, and surely less spoon-feeding and more self-determination would encourage the quicker attainment of maturity.

Admission to Residential Colleges

We conclude that freshmen should be affiliated with the residential colleges on their admission to the University. Even though this objective can be perfectly attained only in the distant future, some important steps may be taken at once. Ideally the freshmen should not live on a separate campus of their own, but in the residential colleges with other undergraduates. This is the best way of making them Yale undergraduates from the outset. We do not think that seniors should be transferred to the Old Campus as has sometimes been suggested; their importance to the colleges and the significance of the college system for them are too great. Ultimately the solution is to build four new residential colleges, but such a happy event will undoubtedly be long delayed because of the cost.

Before these hoped-for colleges are built, we suggest that as an immediate step the freshmen, while residing on the Old Campus, be affiliated in several ways with the twelve colleges. This we think will be beneficial to both the freshmen and the colleges themselves. We recommend that entries in the buildings of the Old Campus be designated as annexes of the different residential colleges, and so marked with the coats of arms of the colleges. The freshman allotted to a particular college would live in an entry-way assigned to that college. Then, throughout their first year at Yale, freshmen should be allowed to attend the social functions of their colleges, to engage in its athletic activities, and on weekends, at the discretion of the Master, to have dining privileges in its dining hall. More important, they should be allowed to participate

in the intellectual and artistic affairs of the college, and this may pave the way to fuller membership in future years.

The Master and Fellows of each college can provide its freshmen with a more significant orientation to Yale and the community than they now receive. Emphasis should be put upon the intellectual resources, of course, but guidance and advice concerning all aspects of University life should be available. Each college should, and would, work out different solutions and programs, and we should cherish such differences. The Yale College Dean's Office would continue to control and supervise the course schedules, but large parts of the supervision might be increasingly placed in the Masters' Offices. The details for such an arrangement should be carefully worked out between Yale College and the Council of Masters.

Counseling and Advising

It is our belief that the present system of counseling and advising which is now a function of the Freshman Year should be made an integral part of the activity of each residential college through the immediate establishment of a decentralized administrative structure. Each college we think, should have in residence a junior official, with a distinctive title such as assistant master or resident dean, who would assume the responsibility of advising the freshmen and upperclassmen attached to his college in both academic and non-academic matters. Such persons would be provided with the records of their students and copies of all reports upon them. These officials would have a double allegiance both to the Dean of Yale College and to the Master of the College. They would take care of minor matters of discipline themselves, but in larger matters and in academic actions they would constitute an Executive or Rules Committee for the Dean's Office. The presence of faculty members as

Fellows of a college assures us that academic advice will be available to freshmen as well as to upperclassmen. Until freshmen live in the residential colleges, it may be necessary to have a few proctors in the entry-ways of the Old Campus occupied by freshmen, and it would be advisable that the proctors be connected in some way with the college whose students they supervise.

We think these arrangements have much merit, both for the colleges and for the freshmen. With the concentration of academic and non-academic counseling in the residential colleges, it is likely that the role of the colleges will become more meaningful both for the students and the Fellows. We estimate that this decentralization will cost little more than the present system of counseling and advising, and indeed economies may later result from the plan.

The key members of the present staff of Freshman Year should immediately become a part of the Office of the Dean of Yale College. The experience and skill of these men and women will be necessary to the successful decentralization of the counseling and advising system, and the staff will be needed to supervise the freshmen. Further, we feel that while the freshmen continue to live on the Old Campus the regulations governing their behavior should be the same as those for the upperclassmen. We think that no new buildings should be constructed to serve merely the needs of freshmen; their very physical presence would delay the realization of the incorporation of the freshman class into the student body as a whole.

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