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THE STUDENT
AND HIS PUBLIC IMAGE

— the Dean Speaks Out

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NASPA Division of
Research and Publications
Foreword

Aware that the college student, his "protest mood", his "new morality", have been widely discussed and analyzed in popular press and professional journals, the NASPA Division of Research and Publications viewed with concern two particular aspects: student personnel administrators, who should be knowledgeable on the subject, have for the most part contributed relatively little to this literature, and many educators seemed overly dependent upon published material as the basis of their observations about college students.

This document reports concepts of college students of 1966 held by a sizable group of student personnel deans in American colleges and universities. Taken as a whole, the viewpoints constitute an important set of additional data which contribute a significant point of reference for evaluating the mass of published material about contemporary college students and arriving at a fair and accurate picture of them. Although it is possible that the document reveals as much about the contemporary student personnel dean as about the contemporary college student, it is nevertheless true that these men do possess important information about the nature of the college student, his problems, his needs, and his expectations.

It seems clear that the understanding of students here reported reflects an awareness of the dangers of making statements about "the typical college student" on the basis of the selected group of students seen by any one person. Likewise, the impossibility of describing "the college student" in any definitive fashion which ignores individual differences seems obvious to the deans who contributed. In these respects, the reader may have a different impression from reading this document than he obtained from much of the related current literature. We hope so!

Each dean contacted for the survey was asked to identify the "image of the college student" which he felt was being communicated from various sources and comment on this image on the basis of his personal contact with and knowledge of college students, indicating areas of accuracy and of inaccuracy or inadequacy in published descriptions of these students. In short, the deans' attention, and that of our readers as well, was quite properly turned from the literature about students to personal contact with students as the legitimate source of meaningful information about them.

This report was written and edited by Dean Mark W. Smith of Denison University and Dean Jerry H. Godard of Guilford College who currently serve as members of the NASPA Division of Research and Publications. For their capable service they deserve the hearty thanks of the other members of our advisory board and of the entire NASPA membership.

Peter H. Armacost, Director
NASPA Division of Research and Publications
The Student and His Public Image
— the Dean Speaks Out

Introduction

In March, 1966, the Division of Research and Publications of NASPA noting the failure of student personnel deans to contribute or respond to the volume of material concerning the college student in the popular and professional press expressed a strong feeling that this silence should be ended. Thus its chairman, Dr. Peter H. Armacost, asked 99 NASPA participants to respond in writing to the question:

"From your perspective, do you think that the image of the college student currently being presented to his various publics is fair and accurate?"

The following discussion focuses on four significant questions implied by the original question in an attempt to capture the essence of responses of the 43 deans listed at the end of this report. Appended to this discussion are certain total responses which represent molar and distinctive positions. Because the total respondent group is in no way a statistically sound sample of a population, because of the open-ended nature of the inquiry itself, and because of the remarkably individualized nature of the responses, comprehensive analysis and interpretation have been avoided. These deans did speak out in response to the inquiry. Their perceptions and the words they used to express these perceptions are both the raw data and the results of this study.

I. Is there a significantly distorted public image of the American college student?

The overwhelming majority feels that there is, but there is little agreement concerning the degree of distortion or its impact.

Bloland's statement constitutes an approximate summary of initial responses: "Fed by public media, an image of today's college student is emerging which characterizes him as vitally concerned about the state of society and as willing to act on this concern. The adult world tends to see him as bearded, wearing his hair long, and ready to hoist a picket sign at the drop of an administrator's ultimatum. His morals are open to question, he experiments with drugs, and he doesn't trust anyone over thirty. He indiscriminately challenges traditional ways of doing things and is subject to manipulation by sinister off-campus influences, primarily of the Left. Today's college student is stereotyped as an activist or a member of the New Left and society is left wondering what is happening in our ivy-covered halls of learning.
Most of the deans recognize that even the most unacceptable images are distortions of fact, not inventions. Hoffman's statement is representative: "... I think that the image or images of the American college student as projected by the popular and professional communications media are by and large distorted, inaccurate, and unfair. And yet, paradoxically, the reports, articles, news stories, editorials, and books out of which these images emerge are for the most part accurate enough. It's the old story, I guess, of accuracy's not always leading to truth... Color it protest, color it sex, color it LSD, and you have the college student as the public sees him."

Kramer discusses the degree of distortion: "While the total picture has been distorted, there have been more elements of truth than of misrepresentation. There are students who are so deeply concerned and committed that they are involved in the direct action civil rights movement. There are students who feel so deeply about the Vietnam conflict that they will actively debate and have protest demonstrations. There are students who pursue a policy of great liberality in sexual relations. There are students who are experimenting with drugs. But these are not necessarily the same group of students, nor are they involved for the same motives. From my experience, the activist students, the sex and drug experimenting students are a small minority, and if one were trying to develop a portrait of a 'typical' college student, these elements would play a small part."

Other deans react primarily to the stereotyping process itself: "Anyone who sets out to describe the contemporary college student will find himself shooting at a moving target and his editorial marksmanship will suffer accordingly." (Orwig). "... the projected image of our youth is inaccurate in the way that all facile over-generalizations are unfair." (Nygreen).

Still others agree that stereotyping has led to distortion but are more than tolerant of the results: "The activist image is distinctly more attractive to me, and more promising for the country, than the stereotypic conventional, uninvolved, low-risk-taking student of the mid 1950's." (Sikes). "... the present image of the college student is that of a bearded, long-haired, unkempt young man burning his draft card or leading a peace march. Very few students are like this. Perhaps more should be." (Williamson).

Several deans are anything but charitable or philosophical with regard to the impact of distortion:

"Today's college student is being subjected to one of the most aggressive smear campaigns in memory" (Bonner). "... the public attention given to relatively isolated incidents and the tendency to develop stereotyped images do a serious injustice to the almost six million young citizens enrolled in American institutions of higher
education" (Clevenger). “To distort the ‘image’ of this national re-
source, to depict the total student category as capricious, irresponsible
and void of integrity merely on the basis of a small segment is an un-
fortunate sham.” (Knox). “Continued accent on sensational aspects
could ultimately harm the nation if it results in an unfair projection
of our future adult leadership” (Siggelkow).

II. Who or what do you feel has been responsible for the
distortion that has occurred?

As might be expected, both the press and its readers receive significant
shares of the blame.

The irresponsibility of the news and communication media is dis-
cussed aggressively:

“In this post-Berkeley era we have been subjected to a deluge of
descriptions, analyses, and stereotyping of college students by all
facets of mass media and the professional journals. Some of this has
been thoughtful and well-done, but much of it, I am afraid, has been
either nervous hand-wringing by those who have little knowledge or
insight or faith, or deliberate over-dramatizing of isolated incidents
for the sensationalizing of news releases — and much of it has done
a real injustice to American college students of today” (Clevenger).
“Unique and traditionally unacceptable rebellious activity is often ac-
cented and perpetuated by the so-called ‘newsworthiness’ of the activ-
ity. The journalist, the TV cameraman, and the radio announcer are
frequently the catalysts which cause the vocal, way-out minority to
perform. In this regard, the news media have not accepted their social
responsibility and are to be criticized for their distorted and incom-
plete portrayal of college students” (Benz). “The disquieting thing . . .
is not the fact that some students protest, or that their protesting gets
reported, but that so much space and time are given to the reporting”
(Nonnamaker). “These scary and glib stimuli to curiosity have the sole
purpose of increasing the readership of newspapers and magazines”
(Nygreen). “Almost anything students do today seems newsworthy,
but the need is great for serious writing about the many problems
of higher education. Various news media should consider carefully
their traditional responsibility for accuracy, objectivity, and fair play”
(Siggelkow). “Efforts of national professional associations and jour-
nalism leaders are urgently needed to develop appropriate codes to
govern the coverage of the American student population” (Lewis).

Furthermore, Rackham foresees little change in the near future: “Writ-
ers and speakers will continue to speak openly and continuously about im-
morality and irreverence on college campuses. They will continue their
neglect of ample evidence of morality and reverence, because these are far
less sensational.”
But few deans are so critical of the press that they ignore the con-
tribution of the reader to his own misinformation: “This distorted mess
is not entirely the fault of the writers. Readers, even some sophistica-
ted readers, have a tendency to create their own stereotypes out of the thinnest
imaginable material, almost like seeing a full-blown portrait in a dab of red
paint... And readers tend to choose in accordance with their prejudices
what they will blow up, or what they will dismiss after a couple of cluck-
clucks. With one fact or story they will use a simple additive process in
shaping their stereotype, while another account may stimulate a geometric
progression. One story about cheating... gives the stereotype a slight dis-
coloration under the left eye, but a story about student sex life may give
it four heads” (Hoffman).

A number of deans assign independent responsibility to general societal
motives and tendencies:

“...society at large has tended to stereotype each new generation
in terms of its most flamboyant and picturesque representatives,
whether it is the fraternity image, the football and pocket flask image,
the goldfish swallowing image, or the success-bound future business
man image. And I suspect it will be forever thus” (Bloland). “As a
fact and as a symbol, college students hold a very special position.
For the social critic, the alarmist, and the cynic, there is no more ex-
citing place to find the weevil of decadence than at society’s core. The
college population representing the hope of tomorrow and vigor of
today is the perfect microcosm in which to demonstrate the shortcom-
ings of our age” (Toombs). “Perhaps the mounting criticism of the
college student is the result of the historical misunderstanding be-
tween the generations. Perhaps it is the result of envy of the financial
and social position of the college graduate” (Bonner).

III. What might be an accurate image? What do you see
as you meet and work with students from day to day?

When the dean gets to the issue of what the American college student
is really like he expresses his strongest convictions:

“The one word most descriptive of our students is ‘altruistic’... In my personal opinion, today’s college student is devoted to scholar-
ship, committed to excellence, strong in moral fiber, and unselfish in
purpose... This is the finest college generation our nation has yet
produced” (Bonner).

“Yes, I find the college student of 1966 to be superbly able to build
our world into a universe of people and ideas. I am not blinded by
their mistakes and impatience. I take faith in their eagerness to under-
stand us” (Dean).
“Today’s students are industrious, sophisticated, more affluent, and in comparison (with those of yesterday) academically stronger and better prepared for college” (McLeod).

“Most ... are bright, knowledgeable, hard working and anxious to make their lives count for something worthwhile ... very difficult to work with in some respects but also very satisfying, and I have great optimism for what they will accomplish” (Sikes).

“The students we see ... tend to be ... more serious and more idealistic ... more sophisticated, more wise in the ways of the world than I was at their age ... more responsible and ready to shoulder the burdens of life; they are honest and sincere, and almost inevitably fair and reasonable ... eager to establish relationships with adults on the faculty and staff ... Today’s young men and women are very fine persons, indeed” (Harris).

“Most are serious, hard-working, intelligent, considerate young men and women ... concerned about grades, relationships with others, and what the future holds ... They don’t make ‘good copy’ ... they don’t sell publications ... my image of the student is very similar to that which most parents have when their son or daughter comes home for a vacation and not like that of the ones whom they read about in their magazine or newspaper” (Williamson).

“They reflect the same suspicious attitudes toward anyone over thirty that their elders reserve for them. The college student reacts predictably; demand, he rebels; push him, he protests; draw the line, he may step over it; ignore him,— impossible! ... Seeks visible accomplishment and productive involvement ... Wants to be appreciated, to be heard, to be respected, to be accepted” (Paisley).

“... today’s students are more mature intellectually but perhaps less so emotionally and socially. This imbalance results in a tendency to view things in blacks and whites, to oversimplify the issues, and to become impatient with what is seen as the older generation’s ‘everlasting caution’ and ‘unquestioning acceptance of the status quo’ ... But the apathy and fatalism, the intellectual myopia, and the search for security, the flat conformity and the social bigotry — almost all of these marks of earlier college generations — have largely disappeared” (Adams).

“There is long hair, sexual promiscuity, cheating, drunkenness, and the misuse of drugs, and most of these things exist to a degree that they never did in the past. But there is also an increase in questing, achieving, commitment, concern, and dedication which far overbalances the negative factors in the image” (Young).

“Judging from the ones I have observed ... most college students today differ little from those of past decades. The modal student is
intent upon the business of obtaining a college degree, however he defines it” (Shay).

“... thousands and thousands of students go about their college business not much caring one way or the other about placards and nudist parties ... not because they are apathetic, but because they are busy being involved in their education ... and in a fairly conventional social life” (Whalen).

“Given understanding counsel and especially time, the present day student may resolve an appreciable number of the problems and incongruities in which our adult leadership has failed. He has the ability and the desire. I am convinced that he will lead us to a brighter future. It need not (I hope) be a perfect one” (Brown).

“In 22 years of working with and for students at four state-supported universities, I have been impressed consistently by the ability of students to spot a ‘phony’ (with or without beard) among their own ranks as well as among faculty and staff” (Knox).

“College youth today tend to reject the affluent values of their elders in favor of a service to others orientation. The strong support for the Peace Corps, Vista, and the overseas and home mission activities of religious organizations all testify to this” (Nygreen).

“The great majority still remain more concerned over jobs, dating, and finances than Vietnam, civil rights, or the threat of nuclear war ... the overwhelming majority do not want to take the time to be properly informed, meaningfully concerned, or intelligently active” (Siggelkow).

“He values peer acceptance to such a high degree that he seldom forsakes it to cooperate with authority and is wary of close association with authority figures if it might threaten his peer acceptance. Yet, he has great concern for values and rights — especially these rights and values as he constructs them ... His sense of liberalism demands the right to be exposed to all the evidence possible ... yet the student of the majority is highly conservative in his reactions to the material presented ... he views the future with great uncertainty despite a frequent attitude of blase' sophistication” (Roberts).

“Although most students observe reasonable standards of behavior, they fail to apply sanctions against a minority of their peers whose conduct is improper” (Dutton).

Shofstall sees some very significant changes indeed: “... a few students are true revolutionaries and the majority are just plain apathetic about controversial social, political, or economic issues ... It is ... misleading to believe that the current unrest on the campus involves only a lunatic fringe, a very small minority that in no way reflects the thinking of the majority ... although most students are
not active, the majority of them are interested in and sympathetic
toward the concerns, if not the style, of the active minority. We must
remember also that the future is always formed by minorities and this
minority may have a lot to say about the future of the majority... It is... misleading to believe that our students today will automatically
become conservative when they grow older. Our students today are
different... The militant advocacy of change gradually seems to have
been given more emphasis than true controversy and dialogue... change seems to be more sought after than education... the moral
values of students are different... religion on the public university
campus is considered illegal and unpopular... our constitutional sys-
tem seems to be in bad repute.”

Knox fervently expresses the feelings of many: “Students whom
I have known are great people today. Students whom I know today
have exhibited a 'touch of greatness’. As they serve their fellow stu-
dents and as they give of their time and talent to various community
volunteer projects without return save personal satisfaction, I am
reminded again that students are people and 'people are too precious
to be wasted'.

Finally, Hoffman may well have an explanation for the silence which
provoked this investigation: “... I think of Joe, of Edith, of Alice, of Bob,
of Abe — these are the snowflakes of yesteryear, but for the life of me, I
can't picture the snow. That's why, perhaps... you don't find many deans
of students contributing to the literature on student characterization.”

In these and other statements can be found common elements which
describe the contemporary student and compare him with his predecessors
as:

1. More sophisticated, urbane, cosmopolitan, informal, experienced,
affluent.
2. Brighter, more knowledgeable, better prepared academically, better
scholastically.
3. More serious and conscientious in response to greater academic
pressure and competition.
4. More dissatisfied with the world around him and more aggressive
and demonstrative in his protest, more idealistic.
5. More insecure and anxious in response to societal complexities,
confusion, and pressures, more introspective.
6. Dominated by the pragmatism of getting into graduate school,
vocational and materialistic in his thinking.
7. Courteous, sensitive, honest, fair, and sincere, but relatively unwilling
or unlikely to take responsibility for the behavior of his peers.
8. Anxious, even determined, to be accepted, appreciated, respected,
noticed, and responded to, to make a difference.
9. More sensitive to any sign of lack of confidence in his ability to exercise mature judgment or to any attempt at imposition of advice.
10. More dedicated to serving others.
11. In search of meaningful relationships with others (including adults) and meaningful personal involvement in a variety of activities, especially in the decisions which affect his life.
12. Significantly critical and skeptical of established beliefs, customs, values, and authority.
13. More actively, personally, and genuinely concerned and better informed about public and world affairs and social problems and issues.
14. More caught up in the spirit of searching, especially for some kind of commitment, and more demanding of the right to search.
15. More diverse in interests, concerns, and accomplishments.

IV. What significant changes, issues, or problems are suggested by the various images and stereotypes, especially the distorted ones?

While decrying distortions in numerous and intensive characterizations of the college student, many respondents seem anxious to search beneath these images for significant issues and challenges. Nygreen is certainly not alone in speaking of “patterns and influences ... which merit our attention and which we ignore at considerable peril.”

As might be expected, the depersonalization issue, the effects of increased academic pressure, and other related factors receive heavy emphasis:

“...institutions of higher learning have often failed to give clear direction and support in forming fundamental moral, social, and spiritual values ... it has been increasingly difficult for students to identify with the institution, to achieve a sense of direction, and to have meaningful, personal associations with members of the academic community” (Dutton). “Every major issue raised by students in severe ways we knew about and should have involved ourselves with them to solve at least two years in advance” (Wright). “The larger number of students and greater freedom in use of time appear to create a stronger emphasis on group and individual introspection” (Patzer). “So much emphasis is being placed on academic excellence and material things that learning how to live a life is being neglected. The data-processed technical world has not yet punched into its do-not-fold-or-spindle card such elements as service, kindness, unselfishness, and humility” (Benz).

Cole stresses a change in the student attitude toward college itself: “...the act of going to college is not perceived by many college students
as a full and personal commitment. They accept it as a practical necessity of life and then search for other ways to fulfill the need for personal commitment."

But the dominant suggestion is that much of the behavior which has provided the basis for distortion is indicative of the critical thinking central to the objectives of higher education:

"... their responses ... are exactly what we have been encouraging for years in education. We have urged youth to believe in and work for causes embracing justice and honor, to be independent, to think critically, to act like adults, to be self-governing and self-reliant, and to distinguish in all areas between the real and the phony" (Riggs). "Some students clearly have the intelligence and maturity for the role of critic ..." (Crafts). "Adults have long suggested that students concern themselves with the critical issue of the campus and the world at large, and that is just what students are doing today" (Paisley).

"... an increasing minority ... is taking seriously the terminology 'a community of scholars' and wants to be involved with faculty members in a more meaningful learning relationship, one in which they are participants rather than just spectators ..." (Kramer). "... the competition of ideas is a sign of intellectual vitality and not (as it was at Berkeley) a mark of genuine distrust and of seriously deteriorating communal relationships" (Adams). "Students have been chided and prodded to be critical of traditional ideas and values and to test abrasively established authority and ways ... Not too many years ago, our cry was that students were too lethargic and apathetic in accepting the status quo. Today, many of us are not sure that we want an aggressive and unaccepting student" (Dutton).

Other respondents insist that changes within the college must be viewed in the context of more basic changes in society at large:

"... society has been changing (radically changing) the role and function of the college and the university, — this change too has become almost violent in some instances" (Yanitelli). "The college student is a product and a part of his age. The ferment on our campuses simply reflects that current in our society. There is a relatively small but active subculture in our society which shows a disrespect for law and order, a disregard for our institutions of democratic government, and a contempt for moral and spiritual values" (Rackham). "Perhaps many of us are remiss in looking at student '66 through youth '36 perceptions without relating all that has transpired in our culture to make life different" (Sorrells). "If society itself is mixed up, how can the students be any less so? This continuing erosion of a more formalized morality has given rise to the so-called new morality which in fact is more of a confusion than a code" (Orwig). "... if the morals of college students today seem shocking, they are not so shocking when seen
as developing over a long period and taking a direction set by society as a whole” (Whalen). “…adult leadership erroneously assumes that the mode of life of previous generations is somehow still appropriate as a solid philosophical base for today’s youth…” (Siggelkow). “Perhaps many of our young people are experiencing conditions of exasperation in their demand for independence as they realize that the authority of adult society has been willing to give the student more independence than he has really wanted” (Robinson).

Crafts introduces other issues: “…rejection of the artificiality and ‘phoniness’ (not merely the impersonality) of campus and societal patterns, student disillusionment with a society which, for all its might and recent advance, still counts millions as economically and socially deprived, and an unavoidable intergenerational clash…”

And finally, several deans offer advice both to themselves and to others:

“…the adult generation would profit greatly by listening patiently and sympathetically to their offspring in college and by discussing with them their views on ways of helping our country meet the crucial problems facing it today…The college generation represents a relatively untapped source of manpower, creative ideas, and valuable energy for coping with the complex issues of the day. This resource, tempered with the wisdom, but hopefully not the prejudices of the older generation, could enable our country to come to grips with and help resolve problems and issues facing it” (Shaffer). “We must define and communicate our strong convictions about the values of higher education…We must continually reflect a quality of being, living, and doing that offers the student an achievable horizon toward which he can hopefully and profitably move” (Crane). “…let us stop glorifying the small minority and push on to the large majority that indeed is a far more dangerous problem with its conformity and easy life philosophy…” (Emmet). “May I also suggest that colleges can do more than has been done to project a realistic image of the college function to their public” (House). “The main theme of our program must be the development of individuals whose behavior is intelligent and is based upon knowledge and understanding, rather than…upon feeling, at the time and at the moment” (Shirley). “Since today’s student is basically serious in his efforts, we should guard against unreasonable demands which might cause him to become cynical and rebellious, or to become ineffective because of incapacitating anxieties” (Thompson).

“The challenge is to provide environment in which student creativity, imagination, aggressiveness, independence, social awareness, and non-conformity might be directed to constructive and productive ends and in which a relationship between the student and the institu-
tion, based on the essentials of learning, can be formed. This will require great clarity of purpose on the part of institutions and more effective promulgation and articulation of objectives and standards" (Dutton).

Orwig sees the institution as somewhat more helpless: "...our students come on through college like Gemini capsules plunging down through the academic atmosphere...although we have structured the path of their descent and we know their capabilities, we can only wait in anxious hope that the parachute of wisdom will blossom forth and let them gently down into creative careers and successful lives."

Finally, DuShane advises the dean not to be too distracted: "...we must not be so misled by cries for freedom and demonstrations against authority as to deny to those students who need it our concern for them, their hopes, and their problems..."

The excerpts above represent only a small and fragmented sample of all that these men have said. Inescapable are the obvious willingness to speak out, the clarity of perceptions expressed, and the desire to look beyond and beneath behavioral symptoms. Perhaps most impressive of all is the extent to which these men, although the very nature of their jobs exposes them all too often to the negative aspects of the college scene, have become or have remained so optimistic with regard to the essential qualities of the students with whom they work. This becomes even more obvious in the total responses that follow.

Dean Bernard S. Adams:

For the past several months, I have been addressing Oberlin alumni groups on "The Student Syndrome." A syndrome, I remind my audiences, is a number of characteristic symptoms occurring together — especially, according to Webster, "in reference to a disease." I hasten to reassure my audiences that Oberlin is not sick and that her students are, indeed, the products of an unusually healthy, progressive, vital campus environment.

The general public (and often a college's alumni body) seems not to realize that a student body which is critical in outlook, skeptical in turn of mind, and committed to important causes and ideals does much to determine the level of academic excellence that prevails. Colleges want students who are ready to question the status quo, who are creative and aggressive thinkers, who come to us not as containers to be filled or as sponges to absorb but as active, curious young intellects — seeking, inquiring, reacting, and hence growing. The critical, advocative, assertive young activist is often the student who responds best to both the form and the content of a liberal education.

The chief manifestation of today's "student syndrome" is debate, controversy, and dissent. But on most campuses, the interaction between faculty and student body is more likely to be honest and thoughtful dialogue
between partners than explosive action and reaction between adversaries. At most of our colleges the competition of ideas is a sign of intellectual vitality and not (as it was at Berkeley) a mark of genuine distrust and of seriously deteriorating communal relationships.

Today's students see themselves as more sophisticated, more knowledgeable, and more mature than earlier college generations. Surely they have enjoyed a far wider range of pre-college experiences and come to us far better prepared for their college work. Moreover, they have already passed through the "rah-rah" stage and are both more serious about world affairs and less demonstrative about their very real affection for Alma Mater. The problem is that so much has been spread before today's college student, so early and so fast, that the processes of digestion and assimilation have not kept pace with the process of acquisition. As a result, today's students are more mature intellectually but perhaps less so emotionally and socially. This imbalance results in a tendency to view things in blacks and whites, to over-simplify the issues, and to become impatient with what is seen as the older generation's "everlasting caution" and "unquestioning acceptance of the status quo."

We hear a great deal about a "morals revolution" and what are said to be deteriorating values, attitudes, and moral standards among our young people. It may be true that there are fewer absolutes, greater restlessness, and a general aura of tolerance and even permissiveness among today's college students. But there is also an honest search for direction and purpose and, in addition to generally sound standards of personal morality, vastly increased commitment to standards of social morality. If adults find students disturbing, could it be because they tweak our consciences a bit — perhaps because we have not been as disturbed as they about problems of justice at home and of peace in the world?

Today's college students can, of course, be somewhat self-righteous about their sense of commitment and their idealism. And they can be rather too self-assertive and thereby tend to exaggerate their own capabilities and sophistication. They can be intemperate, and they occasionally need reminding that the inability to see any point of view but one's own is the mark of an illiberal person.

But apathy and fatalism, intellectual myopia and search for security, flat conformity and social bigotry — almost all of these marks of earlier college generations — have largely disappeared. I, for one, much prefer to deal with the difficult questions, the untempered idealism, and the occasional extremism of a generation which cares about its world and is trying to accomplish something for it.

Dean Paul A. Bloland:

Fed by the public media, an image of today's college student is emerging which characterizes him as vitally concerned about the state of society
and as willing to act on this concern. The adult world tends to see him as bearded, wearing his hair long, and ready to hoist a picket sign at the drop of an administrator's ultimatum. His morals are open to question, he experiments with drugs, and he doesn't trust anyone over thirty. He indiscriminately challenges traditional ways of doing things and is subject to manipulation by sinister off-campus influences, primarily of the Left. Today's college student is stereotyped as an activist or a member of the New Left and society is left wondering what is happening in our ivy-covered halls of learning.

The stereotype is conditioned by the actions and beliefs of the few. To characterize an entire generation of students on the basis of a small sample may be erroneous and misleading, if we consider this characterization to be representative of the mean or the mode. That a number of students are concerned and committed is undoubtedly true. It is also true that a much larger group of students is not equally concerned and committed about these same societal problems. The student activists are aggressive, vocal, and visible and the delight of the news media because both education and activism are eminently newsworthy today. The adult world is shocked and titillated at the protestations of these few students who, because they are willing to act on their commitments, are the focus of attention and concern. Theirs is a leadership role, but not everyone is following. The greater number of today's students is completing assignments, passing tests, acquiring marketable skills, going out on the weekend, meeting the right girl or boy, getting into graduate school, and participating in the full range of activities available on each college campus.

The activist has been with us for many years — it is his style which has changed. As a result of such influences as the civil rights movement, the Berkeley phenomenon, and a questioning of once traditional authority, his recent activism is more dramatic, takes more aggressive forms, and consequently attracts more attention. His attacks on college rules, foreign policy, and social and economic discrimination have struck hard at long established value systems and attitudinal patterns. However, the reality of this protest does not in itself mean that today's typical college student fits this mold. The campus today is still pluralistic, containing within itself the widest possible range of beliefs and behaviors, only a segment of which can legitimately be termed "activist".

This is not to say that the college student and his campus have not changed within the past few years. Today's student is more sensitive to the world situations, the creeping depersonalization of teaching, political and civil rights, institutional limitations on student freedoms, and social and economic inequities within our society. Not all have joined the New Left as an expression of this increased sensitivity, but many who have not become activists are nevertheless more aware of the world outside the campus than their counterparts of a decade ago.
It is also true, however, that society at large has tended to stereotype each new generation in terms of its most flamboyant and picturesque representatives as the fraternity image, the football and pocket flask image, the goldfish swallowing image, or the success-bound future business man image. And I suspect that it will be forever thus.

Dean J. C. Clevenger:

In this post-Berkeley era we have been subjected to a deluge of descriptions, analyses, and stereotypings of college students by all facets of mass media and the professional journals. Some of this writing has been thoughtful and well-done, but much if it, I am afraid, has been either nervous hand-wringing by those who have little knowledge, insight or faith, or deliberate overdramatizing of isolated incidents for the sensationalizing of news releases — and much of it has done a real injustice to American college students of today.

Of course, the Berkeley incidents shook both the academic world and the American public at large. The open confrontation in a power struggle between students, faculty, and administration violated our long cherished ideal of educational change by thoughtful and committed dialogue, discussion, and examination in an atmosphere of trust and respect. Of course, the filthy speech movement violated our sense of propriety, personal integrity, and moral standards, as did the news stories about the sexual freedom league at one of the large Bay area institutions. And even though it may have involved only a half-dozen students, the sexual freedom league made front page headlines throughout the country and contributed to a public reaction that college students' moral standards must be reaching some kind of new low. Cartoonists have contributed to the false image of the college student with their portrayal of the stereotype of the somewhat sleazy character with beard and sandals and a general allergy to soap and society.

The public attention given to relatively isolated incidents and the tendency to develop stereotyped images do a serious injustice to the almost six million young citizens enrolled in American institutions of higher education.

It has been my great privilege to work with the student generations of the 40's, 50's and 60's. In my review of students over this 25 year period, I am much more impressed by the similarities of the generations than I am by the differences. To copy the phrasing of Max Wise, the great majority of them still come to our colleges and universities "for the very best of reasons." They want a maximum of the rich and rewarding experiences that life on the campus can provide. More central than ever is their involvement in the excitement of the quest for knowledge. Most of them think their colleges, their parents, and the public at large want them to be so involved. They are as beset as ever with problems of personal identity, self-esteem, friendships, relationship with the opposite sex, and vocational
choice. They are as idealistic as ever and as impatient as ever with their elders for their slowness in making changes. They still demand independence, perhaps with an even louder voice than before, and find it as easy as ever to make a real "patsy" out of parietal regulations which they view as too restrictive. (As an aside, it can also be noted that their views of dormitory food have not changed in over a quarter of a century.) Finally, in their attitudes and values they still largely reflect the social climate of the society of their time — the same society which develops institutions for their higher learning.

In spite of the many similarities of the generations, happily there are observable differences which should provide renewed hope for both professional educators and lay citizens. An increasing percentage of college students takes a more vital interest in the world and its imperfections and participates more actively in helping to resolve the social ills of our time in history. Some do join the Peace Corps, some do march at Selma, some do go to the South to help in voter registration, some do participate in peaceful discussion and dissent on national policy, and some do thoughtfully and responsibly promote educational changes. I am afraid, however, that the final analysis will make it clear that the percentage thus involved is far smaller than most of us would like to see.

Far too much emphasis has been given to the so-called "mood of protest" of the 60's and the predicted demise of apathy for the current generation of students has failed to materialize. We know that protests over internal campus matters — primarily campus food or parietal regulations, and in some cases academic freedom — continue today as they did in the 1950's. Protests over the off-campus issues of civil rights and Vietnam have been the special province of the current generation but relatively small numbers of students have been involved. In one recent study of 1,000 four-year institutions, 21 per cent reported protests over Vietnam, but with only 4 per cent of their students involved.

The only change in the traditional educational challenges is that of increasing the commitment to assist ever larger numbers of students to look more objectively at the world in which they live, to listen with greater care to what they have to say about their own education and how well it prepares them for their responsibilities as educated citizens, and finally, to help them see more clearly that the pursuit of higher education inevitably involves them with all of humanity.

Dean James W. Dean:

The college and university student of 1966 is an amazing development of the human race in a complex world and environment that seemingly has no past and a doubtful future. He is a part of progress on one hand and a servant of mankind that allows spoils and decay to confuse and distort all development. The college student lives in affluence and yet allows starvation, disease, and criminal tragedy to control the patterns of decency.
The college student is actually the best physical specimen of the ages with an intellect to match his development. He can fight for the “right” to live and yet contribute wholly to his own destruction. What then can we say of this miracle of society called “the college student, 1966”?

I find the student well-equipped to understand himself and others. College youth are firm in their convictions of truth as they see and experience that important phase of human behavior. They are not betrayed by the platitudes of falseness loosed in our world by today’s adult leaders, i.e. — war and patriotism — justice and equality — the fables of success and failure — love and marriage — brotherhood and hate — even life and death. They are slicing away, bitterly, the prejudices and the errors of our shrinking world and are determined, in their way, to develop a new psychology of and for life in which they will lead and develop their techniques. Gone forever are the days when the college student will exist on theory and the spoken and printed word — rules and regulations — pacts and treaties. The real truth will be decided, in their world, at a price civilization must accept as ultimate and complete.

Yes, I find the college student of 1966 to be superbly able to build our world into a universe of people and ideas. I am not blinded by their mistakes and impatience. I take faith in their eagerness to understand us. I am glad, in fact pleased, to be able to work with, for, and alongside this belief in the truth of society and mankind. Yes, the college student is capable of improving our way of life with or without our help, and I hope he can prove his right of heritage and we can be of help.

The philosophy I have advocated is dulled by the day to day events enlarged by their invasion of the higher educational community. The views of writers and people in the news media, often poorly equipped to express the facts of college life and student, leave an inaccurate and distorted picture of college youth. Despite this obstacle the student has not lost perspective and generally ignores this false image. The few in the college society who perpetuate those inaccuracies often portrayed in the news are just that, a minority, not fully accepted by the millions classified as the real college generation of the 60’s.

Youth will be served. We all know and accept that fact. It is my hope the college student of 1966 will and can make those words even more prophetic in the 70’s, 80’s, and forever.

Dean Randall W. Hoffman: “Color Him Motley”

To get right to the point, I think that the image or images of the American college student as projected by the popular and professional communications media are by and large distorted, inaccurate, and unfair. And yet, paradoxically, the reports, articles, news stories, editorials, and books out of which these images emerge are for the most part accurate enough. It’s the old story, I guess, of accuracy’s not always leading to truth.
The composite picture that comes through from the media is, I'm afraid, an astonishing phantasm compounded of the hunchback of Notre Dame (as played by Lon Chaney), Dorian Gray in his last gruesome moments, Don Quixote, and Joan of Arc. Color it protest, color it sex, color it LSD, and you have the college student as the public sees him.

This distorted mess is not entirely the fault of the writers. Readers, even some sophisticated readers, have a tendency to create their own stereotypes out of the thinnest imaginable material, almost like seeing a full-blown portrait in a dab of red paint. Similarly, public relations officers are constantly on the alert and constantly in a stew lest the actions of one student indelibly characterize the whole institution.

And readers tend to choose in accordance with their prejudices what they will blow up, or what they will dismiss after a couple of "cluck-clucks". With one fact or story they will use a simple additive process in shaping their stereotype, while another account may stimulate a geometric progression. One story about cheating, for example, gives the stereotype a slight discoloration under the left eye, but a story about student sex life may give it four heads.

In similar fashion, the activities of a small minority may be interpreted as the customary conduct of all, and so a single mass-circulation story about an infinitesimal percentage of the total student population colors them all devotees of protest, passion, and pot.

I am not going to be sentimental, and I am not going to try to glorify the college student, but this is not the picture that I carry in my mind at the end of a college year after countless conversations with students, individually and in groups, on topics mundane, spiritual, personal, familial, philosophical, political, pedagogical — you name it. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure that I have a picture at all. When I try to call up a picture, I think of Joe, of Edith, of Alice, of Bob, of Abe — these are the snowflakes of yesteryear, but for the life of me, I can't picture the snow. That's why, perhaps, unless I'm atypical, you don't find many deans of students contributing to the literature on student characterization.

**Dean Carl W. Knox:**

Students come in various shapes, sizes, and varieties. They manifest different degrees of brightness, dullness, and abilities to learn. Since they emanate from town and country, inner-city and suburbia, a wide disparity of family hopes and financial support is represented on our campuses. Just as the goods stocked in a supermarket fall under many categories other than groceries so do students registered in our colleges and universities make up a broad spectrum of different kinds of people. The communality of their registration does not mean a communality of motivations, interests, or personalities, and the news media which generalize about "dissent",

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“student sex mores,” and a “retreat from values” are operating from a very small “eye catching” sample.

In 22 years of working with and for students at four state-supported universities, I have been impressed consistently by the ability of students to spot a “phony” (with or without beard) among their own ranks as well as among faculty and staff. This lack of authenticity, this pretense of someone’s trying to be a person different from what he is really, has meaning here. The distorted image in a fun-house mirror assumes different connotations when reproduced in newsprint and projected over the “tube” into living rooms across the country.

Students are people with the strengths and weaknesses in any comparable sampling of our citizenry. It may be argued that admissions standards and financial resources automatically apply selective screening processes to all who become students. It may also be supported that never in the history of mankind has a nation via national, state, and local legislation ever placed so much faith in men’s minds. To distort the image of this national resource, to depict the total student category as capricious, irresponsible, and void of integrity merely on the basis of a small segment is an unfortunate sham.

Students of today are brighter than their fewer counterparts of 30 years ago. They are living under pressures—the bomb, the draft, and grades for further graduate and professional schooling—quite unlike those upon previous generations of students. When society itself is questioning the relevancy of God, the purpose of man, and the effectiveness of all established institutions, students are, somehow, expected to “make normal progress toward a degree.”

Students whom I have known are great people today. Students whom I know, today, have exhibited a “touch of greatness.” As they serve their fellow students, and as they give of their time and talent to various community volunteer projects without return save personal satisfaction, I am reminded again that students are people and “people are too precious to be wasted.”

Dean Fred Kramer:

The image of the American college student presented in the national press and over the radio has tended to be sensationalized and therefore is to a considerable extent distorted. This image certainly is not a result of any deliberate attempt by the press or radio to project a particular image of college students, but I believe it is a natural outcome of their search for news items. In a world where daily attention is directed to the unsolved problems and tensions, the focal point of the dissension and questioning of today’s society has been the college generation. Education itself has also become a key focus in the United States because of its crucial role in overcoming barriers of race and economic deprivation. The mushrooming ex-
pectation of the American public that an increasing percentage of youth should attend college has also directed attention to the quality and type of education on college campuses. Most recently, attention has been directed to the traditional privileged status of American college students' role in the military program of the country. These concerns, along with the publicized so-called sexual revolution and the experimentation with drugs, have placed the spotlight on the American college student. The press and radio have tended to concentrate on individual campuses and individual groups of students who were attracting the attention of the public outside of the colleges.

While the total picture has been distorted, there have been more elements of truth than of misrepresentation. There are students who are so deeply concerned and committed that they are involved in the direct action civil rights movement. There are students who feel so deeply about the Vietnam conflict that they will actively debate and have protest demonstrations. There are students who pursue a policy of great liberality in sexual relations. There are students who are experimenting with drugs. But these are not necessarily the same group of students, nor are they involved for the same motives. From my experience, the activist students and the sex and drug experimenting students, are a small minority, and if one were trying to develop a portrait of a typical college student, these elements would play a small part. However, I hesitate to use "typical" student because there really is no such student. College institutions and settings are different, and a student at one campus may be quite different from a student at the other. Within a particular campus, there are students who are vocationally oriented, intellectually oriented, or socially oriented; there are those who are more concerned with scientific development than with the humanities. It is therefore dangerous for a college official or a dean of students at a particular college to make statements about college students generally unless he has visited many campuses, spending considerable time on each and talking to students in depth. Although personnel workers are perhaps more intimately involved with student life than any other segment of the college scene and may therefore have a more balanced perspective, it is also true that college officials can misjudge the spirit of the student body. My own experience in student personnel work leads me to make the following statements about today's college student:

In the basic element of his search for self and identity, he really is not substantially different from students of previous generations. He still needs to learn about himself and how he relates to other human beings. He wants to be accepted and respected and is concerned with a life that will be rich for him as an individual. Circumstances of history have made it possible for him to be more reflective, questioning, and searching than previous generations. There seem to be many reasons for this. He has
been raised in an affluent age, and there has been time for reflection and concern about the meaning of life; he has not had to focus his primary attention on attaining basic necessities. For him these have never really been in jeopardy.

His main focus has been on surviving and excelling in the educational world. This has been his pressure point. The importance of a college education and the difficulty of entering college have necessitated a continual concern for academic success from grade school through high school. As a result, his educational background has naturally led to a more sophisticated approach to knowledge and to the world, and the student is therefore much more prone to ask probing questions and to be searching when he arrives at college.

These factors, along with the turmoil of this world and the never-ending evidence of man's shortcomings in solving the basic human problems, have added new dimensions to the personal world in which the student lives. His search for identity and selfhood is more complex because it is so much more intimately related to the kind of society we are building in America and the kind of international society emerging in the world. The basic questions of civil rights, human dignity, poverty, and the search for peace are in his direct consciousness in a way that perhaps never has been true before. More white students, through acquaintance with Negro students, are beginning to know first hand the underlying tensions of the struggle for civil rights and equal opportunities. Many college students' horizons are being greatly broadened, sometimes dramatically, because of travel and study abroad. Friends returning from the Peace Corps, enlisting in the Peace Corps, or enlisting or being drafted into the military service, again force these problems to the student's attention. Although students are still basically vocationally oriented and are searching for a career that will for them mean personal satisfaction and fulfillment, they are increasingly being forced to ask themselves what is the relationship of my career and future life to some of the great issues facing society today.

While most of the students are touched by external problems and forces of society, most of them go through a rather routine stage of development and seem to focus their main attention on their own development with not too much overt recognition or acknowledgment of these other forces affecting their lives. The primary focus most of the time is on survival in the academic competition; a great many of them consider concern and protest a luxury, something to which they are not antagonistic but which they do not see of crucial importance to them. We still have the picture of seemingly indifferent and apathetic students in many areas of campus life. Perhaps it is not fair to characterize this picture as apathy; perhaps it is more a case of resignation to the facts of life as they see them. One does not have too much elbow room if one is to excel in college; especially if one is trying to prepare for further graduate professional work. This, of
course, is true of most of the undergraduates of the liberal arts colleges of America today. Parenthetically, I should say here that my remarks have been concerned primarily with the male student. A woman in the American college today has many of the problems of a man because she has a sensitivity to the disrupting forces in society and is increasingly striving to compete in a man's society. She has the added complex challenge of evolving her own unique role as a female and of developing a point of view and philosophy toward her career, marriage, and active participation in the affairs of the world.

While it is true that obtaining a sense of self identity in the intellectual competition is a primary focus, it is also true that the college student of today is basically idealistic and genuinely concerned about the welfare of society. My experience has indicated that while there is a different view toward some of the conventions of society, basic standards of integrity and morality are very high. Students are searching for the meaning of integrity and of morality in a more intense way than the past generations of students.

Students have always been skeptical of the hypocritical aspects of American society; today they are more sophisticated; they are more open in their criticism, and a great many are ready to lend their personal assistance when they see some possibility of noting their protest; they are suspicious and critical of established institutions, the church, the trustees, the administration, and increasingly the faculty itself. Even their own organization and organized efforts are suspect and they resist organized activities and committees.

They are becoming increasingly critical of the process in which they have been educated. While it is not true of the majority, there is an increasing minority taking seriously the terminology "a community of scholars" and wanting to be involved with faculty members in a more meaningful learning relationship, one of participators rather than just spectators absorbing whatever the faculty thinks best. Most faculty, as experts, are loath to share in curricular planning with students, but increasing numbers of students, while acknowledging the expertness of the faculty, no longer accept this without some reservations. They feel that they are the ones who are going to be using their education and knowledge in a new and unclear world, and therefore have a different perspective than that of the faculty members; they therefore believe they have a unique contribution to make in shaping the emphasis and direction of their education.

While they have a great respect for knowledge, they are increasingly skeptical of any patterns or theories that would explain how society develops or that blueprint the direction that society should move. Students are decreasingly searching for dogmatic or institutional answers to the questions of faith and morality; they are pragmatic in their approach and are concerned about whether a philosophy or viewpoint stands up to the
test of experience. They are more concerned about meaning. They want deep meaningful relationships with other persons. They want to learn the meaning of religion, of God in their lives, and tend to turn more and more to their own answers; they look more to their own feelings and less and less to established answers.

In summarizing, I would emphasize the positive aspects of this able college generation; that they are concerned and searching in areas in which they should be; that they are looking and searching for personal meaning and identity in a deep way, and that the pattern for the great majority of students is one of evolution rather than revolution.

Dean Glen T. Nygreen:

We are all too quick to conclude that the headline come-ons project an image of the college student which is readily accepted by the public. These scary and glib stimuli to curiosity have the sole purpose of increasing the readership of newspapers and magazines. They are effective since not only does the prospect of college attendance of young people play a part in the life planning of an increasing proportion of American families but also change is as always a threat to the older generation. With those under 25 soon to become a majority of the population, the changes in thinking and style of life they represent have increasing relevance for all of us.

But there is no single image of college youth, at least insofar as the understandings of the population are concerned. Far too many of us have reassuring, personal experiences with college young people at least in some 90 per cent of the time! These are the hard-working, achieving young people whose stories do not sell merchandise but who make a functioning society possible. Headlines upon experimenters with the new drugs, the new radicals of the left and the right, and the changing sex mores which are now said to permit sex with love among the young — all indicate trends in our society with which we must deal, but they are not descriptive of the huge majority of our college young people.

We suffer from class difference in perception of our youth. As class lines become more distinctive in our society we must be aware that class status tends to be associated with the expectations we hold for the college experiences of our young people. Those of lower socioeconomic origins are likely to idealize the college experience for their children. They will tend to deplore the wasted opportunity when young people do not complete their college work promptly and without interruption. They expect more in the way of upward social mobility as a result of the college years and emphasize the vocational entry function of a college degree. Those of upper socioeconomic class identification, on the other hand, are likely to be more accepting of the vagaries of individual behavior while young people "find themselves". They demand less from a college education and thus will not be unduly influenced by the mass media image of today's youth.
College youth today function at a higher anxiety level than earlier generations. This doesn't show up in the projected image. In large part this is a diffuse reaction to a rigidifying society which impinges upon young people in direct ways while affecting the rest of us only tangentially. Much of the headline behavior simply reflects this basic fact.

College youth today tend to reject the affluent values of their elders in favor of a service to others orientation. The strong support for the Peace Corps, Vista, and the overseas and home mission activities of religious organizations all testify to this. Many fields seeking to attract able young men and women would find their appeals heeded more readily if they would stress the service opportunities inherent in their activities rather than the opportunities for advancement and income.

At the same time, students tend to move away from a narrow nationalism toward a self-definition as world citizens. The realities of an interdependent world in which national pride and self-interest are the true barrier to increasing opportunity for individual self-realization play an important part in the thinking of our youth. This thinking perplexes and alarms many older people whose ideas have been formed under the challenges of an earlier day.

College youth see their educations as a capital investment from which there will be subsequent income regardless of how they hope to spend their lives. Thus personal ambition and striving for status play a far less functional role in their life plans than is traditional in our society. These young people are truly products of their age and culture, more truly so than we who planned our careers under different influences.

To me the projected image of our youth is inaccurate in the way that all facile over-generalizations are unfair. They indicate patterns and influences, however, which merit our attention and which we ignore at considerable peril.

Dean Richard A. Siggelkow:

The image of contemporary college students, presently reflected by the press, radio, television, and all types of periodicals, forms a hazy montage of such complexity that even as the most intent observer begins to bring a part of the confused picture into focus, the image blurs into another, equally momentary, transitory, and indistinguishable.

These unclear impressions are valuable only insofar as they reflect the impossibility of keeping the subjects long enough in view to see what they are really like; but such reports are also dangerous because they are so incomplete and so inaccurate; bizarre or unusual behavior of a few is highlighted as the norm rather than sharply contrasted with the great majority.

Much also depends on what is read at the moment — students are “beat” or “silent”, idealistic or pragmatic, radical or conservative, con-
forming or nonconforming, cowardly or courageous, sophisticated or naively awkward, with questionable moral values or with values "no different than in our day", whenever that was. We need more and better evidence.

While it is admittedly difficult to portray a reasonably clear picture of college youth today, the current national image is neither fair, accurate, nor trustworthy. For one thing, people are in a constant state of change, and the parades of passing generations have their own unique impact on the times that also, for better or worse, constantly change.

Continued accent on sensational aspects could ultimately harm the nation, if it results in an unfair projection of our future adult leadership. Almost anything students do today seems newsworthy, but the need is great for serious writing about the many problems of higher education. Various news media should consider carefully their traditional responsibility for accuracy, objectivity, and fair play.

An individual dean of students' contact with and knowledge of students are only slightly more accurate in that his concern is limited to a single campus. Much like a recent world history text, thoughts and impressions are frequently obsolete immediately upon publication.

Present general reactions include the following: students, as always, generally remain a reflection of current American society, preoccupied with their personal lives and generally unconcerned over national or international issues. Students still enter college to get ahead, anticipating the higher social status and monetary benefits that come with a college degree. Essentially security conscious and materialistic in outlook, they find scholarship and learning important but only as part of the total picture in obtaining that degree. Students arrive at college originally not even knowing if they did well in high school because many of the values that dictate success are mythical and undefined. Their values, if they are conscious of any, are very much like those of their parents. Indeed, contacts with home and parents remain strong enough to tend to inhibit movement into adulthood.

A few sensitive and intelligent college students can hardly fail to experience dismay and concern over daily examples of man's inhumanity to man in the world, their own nation, and even in their home community. Another handful of sincerely motivated students, concerned with people rather than things, is seriously examining the values of society with great interest and introspection. Questions of ethics and morality puzzle some students. Many are convinced, even if it may not actually be so, that they are considered numbers instead of intelligent human beings capable of making a meaningful contribution to society and the world. Deeper underlying causes are more closely related to reactions against an increasingly impersonal society that often appears to have more respect for machines than human beings.
Meanwhile, adult leadership erroneously assumes that the mode of life of previous generations is somehow still appropriate as a solid philosophical base for today's youth — that all we need to do is to superimpose the past on the present. It is not that simple, but many adults are surprised — and frequently hurt — when what appeared to them as a good pattern is rudely cast off as useless and obsolete.

The tragic conclusion is that, if students in any general sense are permanently committed in great numbers to significant issues, we have yet to discover them on this or any other campus. The great majority still remains more concerned over jobs, dating, and finances than Vietnam, civil rights, or the threat of nuclear war.

The extent of real turmoil and concern over world problems remains highly exaggerated and presently means not much of anything, even if it does sometimes sell newspapers. Conversely, to catalogue the majority of students as generally lacking in ethics or morality is similarly an incorrect perception although this, too, happens to be commercially profitable.

The desire to inquire into the true nature of things and the exercise of the right of dissent are essential if we are to survive as a democracy. As never before we need more and more participants in our society with informed and intelligent viewpoints.

What is noted here also applies to the faculty and the administration who have helped create and perpetuate the existing lethargic and spiritless educational climate — if it did not exceed the scope and intent of the original theme more emphasis should be given this point.

Perhaps many students do really care about issues and problems that beset mankind, but the overwhelming majority does not want to take the time to be properly informed, meaningfully concerned, or intelligently active.

Dean Walter Sikes:

My immediate response to the question of whether the image currently presented of the college student is fair and accurate is “no”, a safe response because any stereotype is to some extent inaccurate, which is not to say that there is no basis for it. I presume the stereotype at issue here is the rebellious, demonstrating, politically active, perhaps “beat-looking” student. As has been frequently pointed out by college educators, these students comprise only a small percentage on even the most active campuses. It is a mistake, however, to conclude that therefore only this small percentage of students is concerned with the issues which their activities highlight. There are, of course, many students who are in college just to get vocational preparation, or to have a good time, or to kill time. Nevertheless among the students I see there is a widespread concern about such issues as freedom, authority, decision processes, relevance of the curricu-
lum to living, and the quality of teaching. There is also widespread concern about public affairs such as civil rights and Vietnam. Many students who have never participated in a demonstration and probably never will are thinking about these issues and are to some extent involved in trying to influence the course of events.

These problems are clearly important and are particularly legitimate concerns for those who are being trained for leadership in our society. I am delighted to see students actively involved in issues of such real significance. The activist image is distinctly more attractive to me, and more promising for the country, than the stereotypic conventional, uninvolved, low-risk-taking student of the mid 1950's. There was at that time, of course, great concern expressed about the passivity, apathy, and conformity of students. That image was also to a considerable degree inaccurate, but it contained some element of truth.

I do perceive a kind of dynamism and a drive to become realistically engaged with the world's problems which is more prevalent among young people now than it was ten years ago. Coupled to this general social concern is a particular aspiration to gain some power in matters of immediate concern to them on the campus. The desire to influence decisions by which one is affected is, of course, by no means limited to students. The same issue pervades faculties, junior executive groups, union members, etc. Recently students have been receiving attention through their efforts to gain a more meaningful voice in the affairs of their institutions. This animus extends well beyond the student population, but when students are the movers, the tensions which a proposed shift of power always produces are compounded by the intergenerational kinds of problems which seem to be continuously with us. The misunderstanding and mistrust which so often characterize relationships between adolescents or young adults and older adults are certainly factors in the criticisms which are leveled at students and which they hurl at the "power structure".

I should add a final generalization which I think needs to be taken into account. Most of the members of the present student generation with whom I work are bright, knowledgeable, hard-working, and anxious to make their lives count for something worthwhile. They are very difficult to work with in some respects but also very satisfying, and I have great optimism for what they will accomplish. It is painful to have our shortcomings emphasized, especially if done by a group which some think should be seen and not heard; but such a critical process, even if a bit unruly, can be very serviceable to society. (It is nearly always the young who point out that the king has no clothes.) And it is not enough to show them how well off they are compared to previous generations of students. It is the gap between aspiration levels and perceptions of the current status which creates dissatisfaction.
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