

Protecting Students From Themselves

By Frances Hunt, '29

Underprepared students won't admit it, and over-ambitious students work too hard—so O.U. develops a new solution

AS the student population of the University of Oklahoma climbs farther above six thousand in the Fall semester of 1938, University administrators will put new emphasis on their personal interest in each student and how he is getting along.

There are two big objectives. First, no freshman will fail in his studies if it is possible for the University to help him make a satisfactory record. And second, no student will be allowed to undertake an impossibly hard schedule of class work and outside employment.

Officials have been thinking and planning for months how best to help freshmen pass their first-year courses and how to keep every employed Sooner student from overworking and injuring his health.

The new "remedial program" is the answer to the first problem. The answer to the second is a compulsory physical examination for all new students and a decision by faculty advisers to restrict working students' enrolment each semester to a reasonable scholastic load.

No other university has a remedial program like that just announced by President Bizzell. The idea is unique, and it has developed from the particular needs of students on this campus, in this State, where higher education is on an unusually democratic basis. Other state universities will watch its operation.

The essence of the plan is that all freshmen will take three placement examinations during freshman week—in English, mathematics and social science—and if they rank in the lowest groups in these tests they will be enrolled in special five-hour, non-credit classes in those fields.

Charles C. Bush, associate professor of history at Northwestern State Teachers college, Alva, has been appointed to the University faculty as director of the remedial program and assistant professor of social science.

His work will be to teach the sections of Social Science A, one of the new courses, and to direct the program as a whole. Members of the mathematics and English departments will teach the other special classes.

The classes will be conducted so as to teach students how to study, how to listen to lectures and take notes, how to adjust themselves to the university environment. Conferences will be held often. Reading

tests will be given to find out whether the reason some students cannot understand subject matter is because they can't read well. If so, they will be taught to read effectively. Every effort will be made to prepare poorly equipped freshmen to enter regular university work in their second semester.

Those freshmen whose rank is low on two or three of the placement tests will be known as "university freshmen" and will be placed in two or three of the five-hour classes. They will not be allowed to enter the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Engineering or any of the other regular University divisions until they have passed the remedial courses. But otherwise they will be under the same regulations as all freshmen, and will be eligible for any campus activity.

If a freshman makes a poor showing in only one of the three examinations, he will be enrolled in the school or college of his choice. In case that school or college requires him to take the subject in which he ranked low, the department concerned will place him in the remedial class rather than in the regular freshman course.

The new director came to Norman August 1 to complete detailed plans for starting the program.

Mr. Bush is a Sooner alumnus of the class of 1923, received the M.A. degree in history in 1932, and has done three years of advanced study toward the Ph.D. degree.

AFTER leaving the University in 1928, he worked several years in a bank in Prague, then went to Oklahoma City and entered the mortgage business. In 1931 he came back to school as a graduate student, and completed work for the master's degree in August, 1932. He spent the next three years in further study here, also serving part of the time as a graduate assistant in the history department. In 1935 he went to Alva and taught there until his appointment at O.U.

He is well fitted to handle all the problems that freshmen bring in for solution. Freshman men will find he knows the answers concerning military science courses, for he has been a first lieutenant in the Reserve Corps since 1922. He also did considerable work among the Boy Scouts at Prague, and at Alva has been active in counseling students.

Dr. M. L. Wardell, assistant to the president, who has given the remedial program a great deal of his attention, believes that about 175 freshmen will be placed in the special courses.

He explained that the program has as its



Charles C. Bush, '23, '32ma, head of the new remedial program.

aim the elimination of needless failures on the part of students, freshmen in particular, and the helping of students to make the transition from high school to college.

"All freshmen will be helped," he declared. "Some of the reasons for many students' failures are: small high schools may be insufficiently equipped with libraries and apparatus for the teaching of science; teachers may be insufficiently trained; low standards may prevail in the high school; students may have lacked application while in high school; or they may lack information as to the content of the University courses they enroll for.

"Too, when a student enters the University, his ability may not be properly evaluated, and consequently he may be placed in courses where it is impossible for him to pass with creditable grades.

"Therefore it becomes the duty of the State University to provide a plan whereby those freshmen who promise to be failures can be placed in courses that will prepare them to do what is required of them. In some cases, of course, the student should be advised to go back to high school for further training."

Suggestions leading to the creation of the remedial setup came from faculty members who dealt with three different phases of student aid last year.

Interviews with students who had flunked and were petitioning to be excused from paying the "fee for repeated instruction" showed that many had been enrolled in

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courses for which they were inadequately prepared.

The Phi Eta Sigma tutorial program, set up last year with an office in the Union, showed the need for individual help for many students whose grades were falling below standard. Between five hundred and six hundred students received tutorial help each month from the members of Phi Eta Sigma, men's honor society, after the program had become well established last spring.

And the "work-credit-load committee" of the faculty discovered that many self-supporting students were overtaxing their strength and lowering their grades by assuming too heavy burdens of employment and classes.

The work of this committee has helped to shape the remedial program, which will include two fundamental parts besides the new classes: physical examinations for all freshmen and other new students; and the working out of a well balanced program for each working student, so that he can fill his job, get his lessons and have time for recreation.

Miss Ima James, head of physical education for women, has been trying for years to persuade students and faculty advisers to avoid overloading schedules of working students. She has seen too many girls break down under the strain of trying to fill two or three jobs, carry 16 or 17 hours of class work and keep up with a few campus activities as well.

One freshman, a business administration student, took a full course of study and also worked 192 hours a month at a down-town picture show. Since that wasn't enough work to pay for all her expenses and buy her clothes, she also typed cases for law students, at 3 cents a case. She had no time to study, so her grades were poor. In fact, she had lost an NYA job in the first semester because of poor scholarship, and then took the theater job. The work-credit-load committee advised her to drop some of her courses, but she was unwilling to do so.

In any discussions of students' abilities to earn their way and still make good scholastic records and thrive physically, it is always pointed out that some students make a go of it. Miss James' opinion, however, is particularly valuable since she has observed the college careers of thousands of girls during her years as head of her department.

She says the idea that self-supporting students should complete a college course in four years is "the silliest idea ever started."

"We who know what the human organism will stand must keep students from wrecking their health," she declares.

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