

# SOONER MAGAZINE

PUBLISHED EVERY MONTH BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION

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VOL. XVII

SEPTEMBER, 1944

NO. 1

## Raising Educational Standards

A year ago this month 484 freshmen took placement tests in English and mathematics given to all students who enter the University for the first time.

The result of these tests showed that 74 students (15 percent of the number taking the test) made grades so low that they were not qualified to enter the regular University English course for first-year students. Instead, they were placed in a class designated English 1A until they were able to raise their grades and qualify for entrance into the regular course.

Even more disheartening were the results of the mathematics placement test. A total of 156, or 32 percent of those taking the test, did not qualify for entrance into the regular University mathematics course for freshmen. These were admitted into a course known as Mathematics 2A for review and drill until they could qualify for the other course.

The educational picture looks pretty gloomy when students fresh from high school score such low marks on relatively simple placement tests. The import of these figures is heightened if one considers that the best students among high school graduates are usually those who come to college.

Educational authorities all over the country have pointed out that in recent years colleges have almost bent over backward in liberalizing entrance requirements. As a result, the poor students have been admitted with the good, making it difficult for the professors to make much progress in classes where some students advance right along and others lag.

A professor at the University of Michigan described the situation thus, "As one, who for forty years has favored liberalization of entrance requirements for college, I am now forced to conclude that the pendulum has perhaps swung too far. This questioning frame of mind is based upon the fact that in too many high schools in Michigan and other states, students planning to go to college are permitted early in their course to complete the needed sequences in academic subjects. The senior year, which should be the most important one in a secondary school, is then given over to the accumulation of the necessary fifteen units in subjects, some of which are of transitory or even of doubtful value. Then too, the extracurricular activities of the senior year have in recent times been given undue prominence. Thus the transition from high school to college, which is usually quite difficult for good and well-prepared students, becomes extremely so for those who have largely dissipated their energies during the senior year."

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, something must be done about this situation in which our high schools are turning out near-illiterate students at an alarming rate. It is a waste of time and money to teach students in college what they should have learned in high school. What then can be done?

The universities, for their own protection and to save their educational standards from complete disintegration, could substitute entrance examinations for placement tests. Under the placement test system, all students requesting entrance are admitted. Under the entrance examination system, only those students whose grades qualify them for entrance are admitted. The others are refused admittance until such time as they can qualify.

The raising of entrance requirements by universities should eventually lead high schools to tighten up on their own curricula and eliminate non-essential courses, which are offered, often in abundance, in most high schools. Consequently, such basic subjects as English, history and economics, which have suffered considerable neglect in American high schools, would take their rightful place of importance in the curricula. High schools would then be equipped to graduate students with a broad, general education in basic subjects and better prepared for the more stringent classes of college.

Steps to raise high school standards will take time and thought. But they must be undertaken to circumvent a general breakdown in the educational system.

## The Cover

Two of O. U.'s three returning all-Big Six Conference players of last year, Center Bob Mayfield (front) and Tailback Derald Lebow, get in shape for the Sooner football season which opens September 30.

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*Sooner Magazine* is published the fifth day of each month by the University of Oklahoma Association, Union Building, Norman, Okla. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 13, 1928, at the post office at Norman, Okla., under the Act of Cong. of March 3, 1879. Subscription \$3.00 per year, of which \$2.00 is for the Magazine and \$1.00 for Alumni Dues. Foreign, \$4.00. Life, \$60.00. Single copies 25 cents. Opinions expressed are those of the editor and do not necessarily represent official action of the Alumni Executive Board. Member of American Alumni Council.