

Under Cover

By DAVID BURR, '52ba

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This column and magazine have often spoken of the enrollment boom the University is presently experiencing, of the continuing increase in prospect as result of higher birth rates in late thirties and early forties, and an increasing percentage of high school graduates who attend college.

Stated succinctly: College facilities here and at many institutions of higher education are presently inadequate to handle the expected increase in enrollments. Now comes a problem diametrically opposed to the one just stated. It is as important.

Speaking before the high school National Science Fair contestants in Oklahoma City in early May, Dr. Alan T. Waterman, director of the National Science Foundation, commented that only half of top 20 percent of nation's most able high school seniors are entering college and of top 2 percent only one-third go to college.

Even the most blase cannot claim it is no reason for concern. Dr. Waterman stated that many people held the opinion that a "wave of anti-intellectualism" had created the problem. He suggests that whatever the cause, a remedy must be shortly forthcoming for the good of the nation.

On a state level, no figures have been revealed relevant to the question of how many of the top students attend college. Dr. Waterman refers to the national picture. However, it would be safe to assume that a number of highly qualified Oklahoma high school seniors do not attend any institution of higher education.

Also on the state level, I doubt if many high school seniors in Oklahoma refuse to consider college due to a "wave of anti-intellectualism." There are much more practical reasons for not attending college. Some of them: 1) Boys facing service calls frequently enlist to remove the certainty of a later service call and do not return to books afterward; 2) Many students do not know what they want to do: choose to remain out of college until they decide; once on a job it is hard to give up income for college; 3) Frequently overlooked in a period of prosperity is the unalterable fact

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that many do not have adequate finances for college.

Perhaps the two most important reasons for by-passing college implied above are time and money. Jobs are plentiful. Pay is good even for unskilled workmen. Why waste four years or more in college? The answer is obvious to age but of little significance to youth. Add to the four years of college the prospect of two years of military service and a young man of 18 can quickly see that he would be an old man of 24 before he could hope to be ready to earn his living. He does not want to make an investment in time.

There is a group of people who do not reason about time but must consider money. These are the youngsters who do not have adequate financial backing for a college education. I have often heard people say, "He shouldn't let money stand in his way. I worked my way through college and am proud of it." The truth of the matter is that an exceptional person can still work his way through college, but he frequently sacrifices health and grades to do it. The dollar doesn't buy as much food as it once did, and it doesn't buy as much education, either.

Alumni, those who know the advantage of higher education, can do the most to correct the situation. The Alumni Association seeks to help worthy students in two major scholarship programs: 1) Alumni Clubs are encouraged to provide scholarships to high school seniors in the immediate club area, and 2) The Alumni Development Fund seeks money for scholarships that can be awarded on the basis of a broader geography. Either program is direct and of immediate assistance to high school graduates. The money is not kept locked away but is distributed to those who offer excellent credentials of scholarship and need semester by semester.

And alumni can help with the time problem, also. Frequently the difference between whether a student attends college or not is decided by advice and interest of people who have experienced the benefits of a college education. Alumni should be the first to offer such advice and interest.

Within the next three months, high school seniors will be deciding what their future plans will be. Will the exceptional go to college or do otherwise? You can help them decide the issue in favor of college. Few colleges these days are engaged in an enrollment race. Yet there is a need for the best qualified students to attend college. Regardless of how crowded colleges and universities may become, they can and will make room for the exceptional student.

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