

The Midwest Gets Its 'College Board'

THIS month the University of Oklahoma began participating in a new pre-college testing program. Brainchild of E. F. Lindquist of the State University of Iowa, the American College Testing program (ACT) is a step toward uniform entrance requirements for the nation's colleges and universities.

Faced with booming enrolments, crowded classrooms and shortage of competent teaching staffs, colleges and universities are approaching a time when selective enrolment will be the rule, even in tax-supported schools. Anticipating these conditions ACT has established a clearing house at the Measurement Research Center at Iowa University and bureaus of co-ordinators in participating states. Tom Sexton, secretary for the state board of regents for higher education, is the co-ordinator for Oklahoma.

Although completion of the test is required for entrants of O.U. and all other public and private colleges in Oklahoma, it is still only one factor in admissions. High school transcripts and diplomas are also considered.

O.U. will utilize the tests in placing students in freshman English and math, discarding the Ohio State Psychological exam and the Iowa High School Content exam previously used for this purpose.

Dr. Glenn C. Couch, dean of the University College and responsible for the program at O.U., praised the test for its use in narrowing down scholarship applicants. "For every scholarship there are 8 to 10 needy applicants," he said. "With this test we have something on which to base our choice—to pick the students with the greatest potential for college."

These tests will also indicate the student's potential for higher education. In some cases further schooling on lower levels may appear necessary and in others diversion to vocational education may be recommended.



Tom Sexton and Dean Glenn C. Couch discuss O.U.'s participation in the new placement exams.

Five factors have baffled individual institutions in the past in setting up consistent admissions programs.

1. *High costs prohibit production of multiple forms of a new test each year.*

2. *Out-of-state students cannot always take the specific tests offered by distant colleges they plan to attend—leaving the school without needed advance information.*

3. *Lack of funds hampers complete interpretation and utilization of test results.*

4. *Tests are often scored inadequately and facilities for processing the data are limited.*

5. *High schools are not always informed on test results, a handicap in curriculum planning and counseling.*

ACT has attempted to remedy these problems. The student pays \$3 to take the test. This covers costs of processing and administration. Both the student and the school save. The student saves travel expense because he takes the test at the nearest participating college. The school saves through eliminating its own placement tests and in having a better, more thorough guidance record.

Fourteen states are participating this fall in the exams, three in the spring, with others considering joining the group. (If a student from a non-participating state wants to attend an institution that requires the test, arrangements will be made by the colleges at a later date.)

Quick processing of data will be possible through use of the scoring machine devel-

oped by Lindquist and Ted McCarrel, also of Iowa University, and manned at the Measurement Research Center, a non-profit organization directed by University administrators at Iowa City. The machine spits out 6,000 graded answer sheets an hour. Results will be sent to high schools and colleges by Christmas vacation.

November marked the first widespread public trial of the ACT exams. A similar test has been given in Iowa for several years. Potential predicting power of the exams has been rated as high as the "college board" (officially the College Entrance Examination Board), used by many eastern schools.

The test itself is divided into four sections—math, English, social studies and natural science—each taking about 45 minutes to complete. Individual questions attempt to measure reasoning on the college level and to indicate ability to perform.

ACT was planned with a four-fold purpose—admissions, scholarship, allocations, guidance and placement. Results of the test are sent to three colleges, which the student specifies, and to his high school. The student will receive a copy of the results and his rating as compared to other students.

The high school will make use of the test results to improve counseling and college preparatory curriculums, always aimed toward producing graduates prepared for college when they enter as freshmen—not after painful and expensive semesters of collegiate adjustment.