President W. B. Bizzell's Page

The University's Obligation to You

MODERN university today expects much of its alumni. They are called upon to render many different kinds of service to the institution that nourished their intellectual lives. Millions are today being provided by former students of the older colleges and universities. It has become a tradition in the institutions of the north and east, for the alumni to share their wealth as it accumulates, with their Alma Mater. State supported institutions are constantly calling upon former students to lend support in securing adequate appropriations. Benefactions and the exertion of influence are merely illustrations of the many demands that a modern university is making upon those who in earlier years have been identified with some school or department of the institution.

But, does not this tendency create a corresponding obligation on the part of institutions of higher learning to continue its interests in its former students after they cease to be resident students? I think so, but I am equally convinced that our colleges and universities have not done much in the way of helpful service to alumni and other former students.

Regardless of what a college or university may expect of its former students, there is an obligation resting upon our institutions to maintain vital contacts with every man and woman who has pursued a course of study in one of them. The larger university involves resident students and former students. It is this larger university that gives us the comradeship of learning. When a student receives a diploma, those of us identified with the institution, should not have a feeling that we are getting rid of him. On the other hand, we should think of those who graduate as having passed on into the larger university of which we are all a part.

It may be reasonably asked, what forms of service may this obligation take? We naturally think of the alumni association which is organized for the purpose of articulating the non-resident group of former students, with the resident group of faculty and students. We have come to understand that the measure of a university's influence is determined by the numerical strength and active interest of its alumni association. Therefore, it is imperative that every great university shall maintain a large and effective association of former students.

IT, after all, what should an 'alumni organization do? The answer to this question, of course, varies with different institutions under different conditions. But it is generally agreed that the essential function of such an organization is to keep well established the contact between former students and the institution, through its annual meetings, its alumni directory, and its general publication.

But, this is not all the university is concerned about. The success of every man and woman who has ever been a student in the institution is of vital interest. It is important that every alumni be profitably employed all the time at some useful work. The alumni organization has an obligation to assist all former students to acquire positions, for which they have had adequate training. It is my hope for our organization that it may render a service of this kind.

The University of Michigan is undertaking an experiment that may have a significant bearing on this whole question of an institution's obligation to former students. I refer to the effort that is being made to induce alumni to continue their studies after they leave the institution. This "Alumni university," is a new venture in educational experimentation. It purposes to direct the studies of any and all former students along any line that may interest them, for an indefinite period of time.

It is the belief of President Little, that funds will be available to carry out this ambitious project. He reported recently, in my presence, that many of the alumni of the University of Michigan had shown a commendable interest in this undertaking. This in itself is an encouraging sign of the times. But, after all, why should not such a plan be feasible? Our institutions have not done enough for any student if it has not inspired him with a desire to learn after he has ceased to be a resident student. Probably the real test of a college education comes in the disposition of college graduates to maintain their intellectual interests after college days are over. My prophecy is, that the experiment will succeed and that in the course of a reasonable time many other state universities will follow this commendable example. I, for one, would like to participate in such an enterprise in Oklahoma.

My sincere desire is to establish and maintain the closest possible contact between the former students of the university and the faculty and resident students. I want the former students to feel a vital interest in the progress of the university and share fully in its accomplishments, and increasing prestige. In no other way can a university fulfill its obligations to those who have been identified with it as students.

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Tuition?

The question of charging tuition at the University of Oklahoma which was raised late last fall has caused considerable discussion on the campus. The Oklahoma Daily has opposed the proposal—entirely unofficial as yet—with vigor.

The student council also passed a resolution which read: "Be it resolved that the student council is opposed to any comprehensive plan of tuition, as has been recently suggested by a member of the board of regents, as a prerequisite to entrance into the University of Oklahoma."

Fees are charged in many universities, varying in amount from $24 to $110 (at the University of Iowa).

A suggestion made by members of the faculty to supervise the finances of the student council led to a resolution opposing faculty management of student finances.

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A Thrill for Doctor Boyd

Dr. David R. Boyd, first president of the university, had a real thrill recently, when the desk he originally used as president of the university, was discovered in the old science hall.

He posed for his picture at the venerable desk. The desk was thrown from a window when the first administration building was burned in 1903 and was considerably damaged. It was pieced together again and used until Doctor Boyd resigned as president.