

# All About Higher Education

"**The American College**," edited by Nevitt Sanford (Wiley, 1,084 pp., \$10) is a psychological and sociological interpretation of the higher learning in America in the second half of the twentieth century. It probably contains more information about American colleges, their students and their faculties, than has ever before been brought together in a single volume—more, perhaps, than most readers care to have. Its greatest use will be to college administrators and to faculty committees and boards of trustees who share responsibility for guiding the course of higher education. But some of the chapters, notably those by Riesman and Jencks and the one by Harold Taylor, will probably be intensely interesting to laymen who are concerned about the nation's colleges.

Thirty different social scientists contributed to the volume which was sponsored by the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. "The American College" grew out of a six-year study of Vassar College students and alumnae, supported by the Mary Conover Mellon Foundation, but goes far beyond the Vassar studies. The editor, Nevitt Sanford, directed the Mellon studies at Vassar from 1952 to 1958, and it was during this period that he conceived the idea for the book and evolved its basic plan. Dr. Sanford is now Professor of Psychology and Education and Director of the Institute for the Study of Human Problems at Stanford University.

The first three chapters provide an overview of higher education as a social problem, a field of study, an initiation rite and a subculture. Three chapters are given to "The Entering Student" in which the authors try to discover why students enter college and what they are like when they enroll. Six chapters are devoted to academic procedures, and three to student society and student culture. Other chapters discuss student performance in relation to the educational objectives of the college, environments for learning, patterns of residential education, dropouts, and the vocational aspirations of students. One section is devoted to the effects of college education and another to higher education in its social context.

This is a monumental work, consisting in part of research reports and in part of interpretive essays. As in any book with thirty different authors, the style is uneven and some chapters are much better, and much more interesting to the general reader, than others. Some of the more technical reports of research would seem to belong in professional journals or in a separate volume rather than in this one. But the total contribution is very substantial.

Last month a group of sociologists, psychologists, college presidents, and educators met at Vassar College to discuss and debate the book and the implications of its findings for the nation's colleges. The comments presented below are selected from the prepared papers read at the Vassar Conference.

"The reason 'The American College' presents a formidable challenge to collegiate educators is that it now calls upon them to face up to both Dewey and Freud, and, except for a handful of them, they haven't yet faced up to Dewey.

"The challenge is to view collegiate education as a process of varied individual development toward personal and social effectiveness, and moreover, to define ends clearly; to accept a broad view of means to include every internal personal force and every external social and cultural force that affects and impinges on the individual, to view collegiate education as a science in which hypotheses about the relationship of

means to ends are formulated and tested over long periods of time."

—WILLIAM C. FELS, President  
of Bennington College.

"As a sociologist, I must ask whether the aim of liberal education as defined in 'The American College' is consonant with the purposes society has in mind in supporting American higher education. As I understand it, the editor and most of his collaborators agree that the prime purpose of a liberal education is the development of the student's personality. I take it that more particularly this means that the curriculum should be designed to bring about greater freedom of impulse, enlightenment of

conscience, and differentiation and integration in the ego. One must agree that this is a proper goal for an individual to set for himself, and that such an individual may properly expect to find an institution prepared to serve his purpose. This is quite different, however, from declaring the development of the student's personality so defined to be the prime goal of liberal education in general."

—DONALD YOUNG, President,  
Russell Sage Foundation.

"I think that I detect in many of the contributors to the present volume a predilection toward making our colleges into institutions for personal and social development. Why should not other institutions of society perform those functions? Why should colleges not specialize in the promulgation of both traditional and useful forms of knowledge but leave to family, church, state, etc., the development of social and emotional life? . . . Let us proceed with our research but restrain our missionary impulses."

—WILLIAM C. H. PRENTICE,  
Dean of Swarthmore College.

"The Sanford studies show that [the college] must become more competent and effective in its pedagogical performance in the development of young personalities. Misunderstood and misapplied these suggestions might take the entire college in the direction of becoming a superbly staffed and equipped super-secondary school. More properly understood and applied, the same findings might spur us to see what can be done to make the critical first two years in college more effective as an emotional and motivational, as well as an intellectual experience."

—KARL W. DEUTSCH, Yale University.

"'The American College' takes a sophisticated view of the environment of the college—emphasizing, as it does, the spread from peer culture to classroom and curriculum. Dr. Katz's chapters on the various determinants of the transaction between student and teacher, while more speculative than most other sections—legitimately defines the meaning of a college environment in terms that go beyond the physical campus or the dynamics of small groups. The book implies, and in several chapters makes explicit, certain notions about the probable psychological costs of a college education in America today."

—BENSON R. SNYDER, Psychiatrist-in-Chief, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"'The American College' avoids discussion of the financing of education

but social scientists should be put on notice, as educators need not be, that the kind of education which the authors directly or by implication support is expensive. The two colleges that are its leading exponents are the most expensive in the country."

—WILLIAM C. FELS.

"Dr. Sanford has said that the social scientist has a third function, that of reform. I cannot agree that the sociologist has such a function in his role as sociologist. . . . Research never dictates what should be done, only hopefully, how a goal otherwise determined may or may not be approached, and something about relative costs."

—DONALD YOUNG.

"The folklore of higher education in the United States has often been debunked by us intellectuals. Faculties tend not to believe that football, fraternities, and campus politics have much to do with education, though the American myth would have it that exactly those experiences rather than ones in the classrooms really educate for life. But, you know, our critical debunking has no more solid factual foundation than the folklore. Is it possible that smoking room and playing field do indeed make men? How would one find out? Surely it is incumbent upon us to get what facts we can before we divert funds from libraries to gymnasiums or vice versa. One college that has in recent years come to select students almost entirely from the top 1 or 2 percent of the population recently was offered scholarship funds 'for the kind of students we used to have in 1920.' Is there any way to know whether the more relaxed academic atmosphere and the greater emphasis on growth in character and social grace that characterized the campus of forty years ago was a worse or a better place for promoting society's basic aims for higher education? Colleges in the past decade have taken it for granted that ever-increasing intellectual ability and the ever-increasing homogeneity of aptitude are inherently good. Could we be wrong? How are we to find out?"

"Too little of the empirical research reported in 'The American College' is directed to such fundamental issues, but a beginning has been made."

—WILLIAM PRENTICE.

"If educators have not heretofore heeded scientists it is because scientists have given them little to heed, and that so unsophisticated as to be virtually useless. I can think of no single administrative decision I might make that I could back with the unqualified authority of science. . . . Educators must be excused if they have not felt they could

stand before their faculties and say we must change this practice to that because science has proved that that is superior to this.

"With the publication of 'The American College,' the educator has lost his excuse, and therein lies its challenge, indeed the greatest challenge since John Dewey's 'Democracy and Education' in 1916."

—WILLIAM FELS.

### *Portrait of a College for Negro Women*

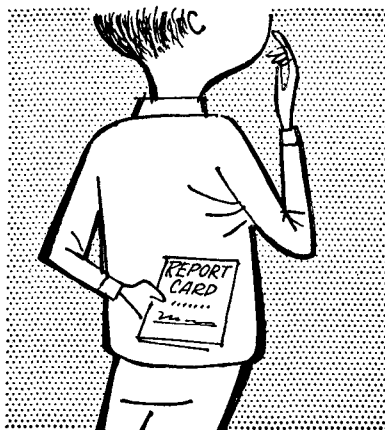
**S**PELMAN, the first college for Negro women, was founded by two white New England spinsters in the basement of a Negro church in Atlanta, Georgia in 1881. John D. Rockefeller and his wife, Laura Spelman Rockefeller, gave their first gift to Negro education to the women and in subsequent years the Rockefeller family has continued to give generously to the college.

In "The Story of Spelman College" (United Negro College Fund, 22 East 54th Street, New York, 376 pp., \$5) Dr. Florence M. Read, Spelman's president for twenty-six years, draws a loving portrait of the institution that she was so instrumental in molding. Under Miss Read's administration, (1927-1953) the character of Spelman College changed enormously, from that of normal school to liberal arts college. During those years, Spelman played a vital part in the development of the Atlanta University System and Center and in the formation of the United Negro College Fund.

In recounting the history of Spelman College, Dr. Read discusses the problems facing a Negro college in the deep South, perhaps the greatest being the large group of Negro students inadequately prepared for college work.

Although the book is confined to the history of a specific institution, many of the factors described are typical of all private colleges for Negroes. While discussing the growth of Spelman College, the author has also provided the reader with a broad outline of the progress of Negro education in the United States.

—SUSAN ZAPP.



## What do Dick, Jane, and Sally offer first-graders in reading?



**M**any of today's young adults learned to read with stories about Dick, Jane, and Sally. Now their children—or, if they are primary teachers, their pupils—are meeting Dick, Jane, and Sally in beginning reading materials.

Storms of controversy about reading methodology have raged around the heads of these story characters, even while young admirers were writing letters to Dick, Jane, and Sally, or sending Valentines, saying with first-grade forthrightness, "We love you. You are our friends."

This year Dick, Jane, and Sally are appearing again in new pictures and new stories in The New Basic Readers Scott, Foresman is publishing for the Sixties. What can teachers and parents count on from Dick, Jane, and Sally today?

First of all, these are real children that are pictured in the youngsters' books. For each character, the artist has had his own children or his next-door neighbors' as living models—playing with toys and pets, watching TV, wearing a space helmet, helping Father set up a barbecue, reacting in true child fashion to the story situations. Dick, Jane, Sally, their parents, their friends are straight out of the world of today.

Second, there's a new style of writing that matches the vitality and up-to-dateness of the pictures. There is much less "Look, look!" and much more expression of thoughts and feelings. The new vocabulary list includes words that are sinews of everyday speech, enabling the printed language to take on the syntax, idiom, and cadence of real talk. Understanding the printed language becomes essential to enjoying and interpreting the action in the pictures, to getting the point of a story. And each story does have a point—a problem is resolved or an unexpected turn of events brings surprise and pleasure to Dick, Jane, and Sally, and to children reading and living the stories along with them.

As always, the Dick, Jane, and Sally stories accent positive values. This is a happy family. Differences occur; child-sized catastrophes occasionally cloud the scene, but there are more "ups" than "downs"; standards of behavior are wholesome; an easy give-and-take among family and friends prevails. Surely it is worth while for children's early reading experiences to portray good things about home and neighborhood living, values we want and need to cherish today.

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