

Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education, 1947

The President's Commission on Higher Education has been charged with the task of defining the responsibilities of colleges and universities in American democracy and in international affairs—and, more specifically, with reexamining the objectives, methods, and facilities of higher education in the United States in the light of the social role it has to play.

The colleges and universities themselves had begun this process of reexamination and reappraisal before the outbreak of World War II. For many years they had been healthily dissatisfied with their own accomplishments, significant though these have been. Educational leaders were troubled by an uneasy sense of shortcoming. They felt that somehow the colleges had not kept pace with changing social conditions, that the programs of higher education would have to be repatterned if they were to prepare youth to live satisfyingly and effectively in contemporary society.

One factor contributing to this sense of inadequacy has been the steadily increasing number of young people who seek a college education. As the national economy became industrialized and more complex, as production increased and national resources multiplied, the American people came in ever greater numbers to feel the need of higher education for their children. More and more American youth attended colleges and universities, but resources and equipment and curriculum did not keep pace with the growing enrollment or with the increasing diversity of needs and interests among the students.

World War II brought a temporary falling off in enrollment, but with the war's end and the enactment of Public Laws 16 and 346, the "Veterans' Rehabilitation Act," and "The G. I. Bill of Rights," the acceleration has resumed. The increase in numbers is far beyond the capacity of higher education in teachers, in buildings, and in equipment. Moreover, the number of veterans availing themselves of veterans' educational benefits falls short of the numbers that records of military personnel show could benefit from higher education. Statistics reveal that a doubling of the 1947-1948 enrollment in colleges and universities will be entirely possible within 10 to 15 years, if facilities and financial means are provided.

This tendency of the American people to seek higher education in ever greater numbers has grown concurrently with an increasingly critical need for such education. To this need several developments have contributed:

- (a) Science and invention have diversified natural resources, have multiplied new devices and techniques of production. These have altered in radical ways the interpersonal and intergroup relations of Americans in their work, in their play, and in their duties as citizens. As a consequence, new skills and greater maturity are required of youth as they enter upon their adult roles. And the increasing complexity that technological progress has brought to our society has made a broader understanding of social processes and problems essential for effective living.
- (b) The people of America are drawn from the peoples of the entire world. They live in contrasting regions. They are of different occupations, diverse faiths, divergent cultural backgrounds, and varied interests. The American Nation is not only a union of 48 different States; it is also a union of an indefinite number of diverse groups of varying size. Of and among these diversities our free society seeks to create a dynamic unity. Where there is economic, cultural, or religious tension, we undertake to effect democratic reconciliation, so as to make of the national life one continuous process of interpersonal, intervocational, and intercultural cooperation.
- (c) With World War II and its conclusion has come a fundamental shift in the orientation of American foreign policy. Owing to the inescapable pressure of events, the Nation's traditional isolationism has been displaced by a new sense of responsibility in world affairs. The need for maintaining our democracy at peace with the rest of

the world has compelled our initiative in the formation of the United Nations, and America's role in this and other agencies of international cooperation requires of our citizens a knowledge of other peoples—of their political and economic systems, their social and cultural institutions—such as has not hitherto been so urgent.

- (d) The coming of the atomic age, with its ambivalent promise of tremendous good or tremendous evil for mankind, has intensified the uncertainties of the future. It has deepened and broadened the responsibilities of higher education for anticipating and preparing for the social and economic changes that will come with the application of atomic energy to industrial uses. At the same time it has underscored the need for education and research for the self-protection of our democracy, for demonstrating the merits of our way of life to other peoples.

Thus American colleges and universities face the need both for improving the performance of their traditional tasks and for assuming the new tasks created for them by the new internal conditions and external relations under which the American people are striving to live and to grow as a free people.

Education for a Better Nation and a Better World

Education is an institution of every civilized society, but the purposes of education are not the same in all societies. An educational system finds its guiding principles and ultimate goals in the aims and philosophy of the social order in which it functions. The two predominant types of society in the world today are the democratic and the authoritarian, and the social role of education is very different in the two systems.

American society is a democracy: that is, its folkways and institutions, its arts and sciences and religions are based on the principle of equal freedom and equal rights for all its members, regardless of race, faith, sex, occupation, or economic status. The law of the land, providing equal justice for the poor as well as the rich, for the weak as well as the strong, is one instrument by which a democratic society establishes, maintains, and protects this equality among different persons and groups. The other instrument is education, which, as all the leaders in the making of democracy have pointed out again and again, is necessary to give effect to the equality prescribed by law.

The Role of Education

It is a commonplace of the democratic faith that education is indispensable to the maintenance and growth of freedom of thought, faith, enterprise, and association. Thus the social role of education in a democratic society is at once to insure equal liberty and equal opportunity to differing individuals and groups, and to enable the citizens to understand, appraise, and redirect forces, men, and events as these tend to strengthen or to weaken their liberties.

In performing this role, education will necessarily vary its means and methods to fit the diversity of its constituency, but it will achieve its ends more successfully if its programs and policies grow out of and are relevant to the characteristics and needs of contemporary society. Effective democratic education will deal directly with current problems.

This is not to say that education should neglect the past—only that it should not get lost in the past. No one would deny that a study of man's history can contribute immeasurably to understanding and managing the present. But to assume that all we need do is apply to present and future problems "eternal" truths revealed in earlier ages is likely to stifle creative imagination and intellectual daring. Such assumptions may blind us to new problems and the possible need for new solutions. It is wisdom in education to use the past selectively and critically, in order to illumine the pressing problems of the present.

At the same time education is the making of the future. Its role in a democratic society is that of critic and leader as well as servant; its task is not merely to meet the demands of the present but to alter those demands if necessary, so as to keep them always suited to democratic ideals. Perhaps its

most important role is to serve as an instrument of social transition, and its responsibilities are defined in terms of the kind of civilization society hopes to build. If its adjustments to present needs are not to be mere fortuitous improvisations, those who formulate its policies and programs must have a vision of the Nation and the world we want—to give a sense of direction to their choices among alternatives.

What America needs today, then, is "a schooling better aware of its aims." Our colleges need to see clearly what it is they are trying to accomplish. The efforts of individual institutions, local communities, the several States, the educational foundations and associations, and the Federal Government will all be more effective if they are directed toward the same general ends.

In the future as in the past, American higher education will embody the principle of diversity in unity: each institution, State, or other agency will continue to make its own contribution in its own way. But educational leaders should try to agree on certain common objectives that can serve as a stimulus and guide to individual decision and action.

A Time of Crisis

It is essential today that education come decisively to grips with the world-wide crisis of mankind. This is no careless or uncritical use of words. No thinking person doubts that we are living in a decisive moment of human history.

Atomic scientists are doing their utmost to make us realize how easily and quickly a world catastrophe may come. They know the fearful power for destruction possessed by the weapons their knowledge and skill have fashioned. They know that the scientific principles on which these weapons are based are no secret to the scientists of other nations, and that America's monopoly of the engineering processes involved in the manufacture of atom bombs is not likely to last many years. And to the horror of atomic weapons, biological and chemical instruments of destruction are now being added.

But disaster is not inevitable. The release of atomic energy that has brought man within sight of world devastation has just as truly brought him the promise of a brighter future. The potentialities of atomic power are as great for human betterment as for human annihilation. Man can choose which he will have.

The possibility of this choice is the supreme fact of our day, and it will necessarily influence the ordering of educational priorities. We have a big job of reeducation to do. Nothing less than a complete reorientation of our thinking will suffice if mankind is to survive and move on to higher levels.

In a real sense the future of our civilization depends on the direction education takes, not just in the distant future, but in the days immediately ahead.

This crisis is admittedly world-wide. All nations need reeducation to meet it. But this fact does not lessen the obligation of colleges and universities to undertake the task in the United States. On the contrary, our new position in international affairs increases the obligation. We can do something about the problem in our own country and in occupied areas, and hope that by so doing we will win the friendly cooperation of other nations.

The fundamental goal of the United States in its administration of occupied areas must be the reeducation of the populations to the individual responsibilities of democracy. Such reeducation calls for the immediate removal of authoritarian barriers to democratic education, and inculcation of democratic ideals and principles through the guidance, example, and wisdom of United States occupation forces. The primacy of the objective of reeducation, however, appears too often to have been lost sight of in the press of day-to-day administrative problems. Yet every contact by Americans with Germans or Japanese either strengthens or retards the achievement of the goal. Evidence reaching this Commission indicates that while many specific existing barriers to democratic reform have been removed, new obstacles are being created daily by inadequacies of educational personnel and policy. Cognizant of the great responsibility of American education to promote democratic ideals in occupied areas, this Commission recommends the formation of a special committee to

appraise progress and offer advice to the Departments of State and National Defense on educational policy and administration in occupied areas.

The schools and colleges are not solely or even mainly to blame for the situation in which we find ourselves, or that the responsibility for resolving the crisis is not or can not be entirely theirs. But the scientific knowledge and technical skills that have made atomic and bacteriological warfare possible are the products of education and research, and higher education must share proportionately in the task of forging social and political defenses against obliteration. The indirect way toward some longer view and superficial curricular tinkering can no longer serve. The measures higher education takes will have to match in boldness and vision the magnitude of the problem.

In the light of this situation, the President's Commission on Higher Education has attempted to select, from among the principal goals for higher education, those which should come first in our time. They are to bring to all the people of the Nation:

Education for a fuller realization of democracy in every phase of living.

Education directly and explicitly for international understanding and cooperation.

Education for the application of creative imagination and trained intelligence to the solution of social problems and to the administration of public affairs.

Toward the Solution of the Social Problems

It is essential that we apply our trained intelligence and creative imagination, our scientific methods of investigation, our skill in invention and adaption, as fully to the problems of human association as to the extension of knowledge about the physical world. This is what is meant by the development of *social invention* and *social technology*.

Human Relations

We have worked wonders by the application of technology to the problems of our physical environment, but we have scarcely touched the fringes of its possibilities in the realm of human relations. In fact, we hardly recognize the existence of inventiveness in the social sphere. Yet the United Nations and UNESCO are inventions no less than the atom bomb, and they are just as capable of technical improvement.

As a people, Americans have come to appreciate the need for experimental research and technical training in the physical and natural sciences, but we tend still to think that good will, tolerance, and the cooperative spirit are all we need to make society function. These attitudes are vitally necessary; we shall make little progress without them; and, as has already been emphasized, education should concern itself with developing them. But alone they are not enough. social techniques and social mechanisms must be found to express and implement them.

One often hears or reads, for example, puzzled questioning as to why man's intense desire for security and his fear of another war have produced so little actual progress toward peace in the world. But man's fear of smallpox did not eliminate that scourge until medical science and technology had invented and improved the technique of vaccination. Nor did man's desire to fly enable him to accomplish the feat until scientific ingenuity and engineering skill had produced the necessary mechanism and had trained men to use it.

In comparable fashion it will take social science and social engineering to solve the problems of human relations. Our people must learn to respect the need for special knowledge and technical training in this field as they have come to defer to the expert in physics, chemistry, medicine, and other sciences. Relieving the tensions that produce war, for example, will require methods as specific and as technical as are those of aeronautics or electronics.

The development of social technology is an imperative today because of the remarkable advances we have made in natural science. Scientific discoveries and their technological application have altered our physical environment profoundly in the space of only a few generations, but our social institutions have not kept pace with the changes—although by applying the methods of science we have achieved marked success in some forms of social organization.

Understanding of Self

Man's capacity to subdue nature to his will has raced far ahead of his ability to understand himself or to reconstruct his institutions. This is true in spite of the fact that higher education itself traditionally has followed the Socratic prescription of putting the study of man first. We have grown strong in the mastery of our physical world, but by no means equally strong in the ability to manage and direct the social forces that shape our lives.

The gap between our scientific know-how and our personal and social wisdom has been growing steadily through the years, until now with the release of atomic energy it has become too wide to be safe.

It is imperative that we find not only the will but the ways and means to reorder our lives and our institutions so as to make science and technology contribute to man's well-being rather than to his destruction. We need to experiment boldly in the whole area of human relations, seeking to modify existing institutions and to discover new workable patterns of association. We must bring our social skills quickly abreast of our skills in natural science.

The irony is that the very developments which have precipitated this critical situation seem likely to aggravate it. The spectacular achievements of natural science, especially during World War II, are certain to bring increased pressure for scientific advance. Already it is suggested that "scientific preeminence will be the keystone of national security." But will it? Can we depend solely, or even primarily, on natural science for our national safety?

In the recent war the margin of our scientific and technical superiority over our enemies was dangerously narrow at times, and the scientists themselves are warning us at every opportunity that they can provide no defense against the new weapons. It is they who are proclaiming most vigorously that this defense can be found only in the realm of social and political organization on a world-wide scale. To quote Albert Einstein for one: "Being an ingenious people, Americans find it hard to believe there is no foreseeable defense against atomic bombs. But this is a basic fact. Scientists do not even know of any field which promises us any hope of adequate defense. . . . Our defense is in international law and order."

Leadership Needed

Upon leadership in social invention, then, as much as upon superiority in natural science and engineering, rests our hope of national survival. Unfortunately, the uneasy state of the world leads us to discuss these matters in terms of national defense. The ultimate justification for progress in science, social and natural, is the contribution it can make to the welfare of people everywhere. Continued advanced in natural science will give strength to democracy in the eyes of other peoples because of the improvement it makes possible in our standard of living, and the development of a more effective social science will contribute to a fuller realization of the democratic principles of justice and freedom for all.

The colleges and universities, the philanthropic foundations, and the Federal Government should not be tempted by the prestige of natural science and its immediately tangible results into giving it a disproportionate emphasis in research budgets or in teaching programs. It is the peculiar responsibility of the colleges to train personnel and inaugurate extensive programs of research in social science and technology. To the extent that they have neglected this function in the past they should concentrate upon it in the decades just ahead.

We cannot pin our faith on social drift, hoping that if each individual pursues his own ends with intelligence and good will, things will somehow right themselves. We cannot rely on the process of automatic adjustment. We must develop a positive social policy, both within and among nations. We must plan, with intelligence and imagination, the course we are to take toward the kind of tomorrow we want.

It Can Be Done

In emphasizing education for democracy, for international understanding, and for more effective social science as objectives for higher education in America today, the President's Commission has no desire to suggest limitations on progress and experimentation in other directions. Diversity in purpose is a potential source of strength in democratic institutions. From the innovative and experimental approach of today may well come the general objective of tomorrow.

These three goals are stated as the minimum essentials of the program to be developed in all institutions of higher education. And they pose a truly staggering job for the colleges and universities. But it can be done. The necessary intelligence and ability exist. What we need is awareness of the urgency of the task, the will and the courage to tackle it, and a wholehearted commitment to its successful performance.

But to delay is to fail. Colleges must accelerate the normally slow rate of social change which the educational system reflects; we need to find ways quickly of making the understanding and vision of our most farsighted and sensitive citizens the common possession of all our people.

To this end the educational task is partly a matter of the numbers to be educated and partly one of the kind of education that is to be provided. We shall have to educate more of our people at each level of the educational program, and we shall have to devise patterns of education that will prepare them more effectively than in the past for responsible roles in modern society.

These two aspects of the task ahead are the subjects of the succeeding chapters of this volume.

Education for All

Education is by far the biggest and the most hopeful of the Nation's enterprises. Long ago our people recognized that education for all is not only democracy's obligation but its necessity. Education is the foundation of democratic liberties. Without an educated citizenry alert to preserve and extend freedom, it would not long endure.

Accepting this truth, the United States has devoted many of its best minds and billions of its wealth to the development and maintenance of an extensive system of free public schools, and through the years the level of schooling attained by more and more of our people has steadily risen.

Record of Growth

The expansion of the American educational enterprise since the turn of the century has been phenomenal. The 700,000 enrollment in high schools in the school year 1900 was equal to only 11 percent of the youth of usual high-school age, 14 through 17 years old. This increased in 1940 to over 7,000,000 students representing 73 percent of the youth.

Almost as spectacular has been the increase in college attendance. In 1900 fewer than 250,000 students, only 4 percent of the population 18 through 21 years of age, were enrolled in institutions of higher education. By 1940 the enrollment had risen to 1,500,000 students, equal to a little less than 16 percent of the 18-21 year olds. In 1947, enrollments jumped to the theretofore unprecedented peak of 2,354,000 although approximately 1,000,000 of the students were veterans, older than the usual college age because World War II had deferred their education. The situation in the fall of 1947 gives every indication that the school year 1948 will witness even larger enrollments.

This record of growth is encouraging, but we are forced to admit nonetheless that the educational attainments of the American people are still substantially below what is necessary either for effective individual living or for the welfare of our society.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, almost 17,000,000 men and women over 19 years of age in 1947 had stopped their schooling at the sixth grade or less. Of these, 9,000,000 had never attended school or had stopped their schooling before completing the fifth grade. In 1947, about 1,600,000 or 19 percent of our high-school-age boys and girls were not attending any kind of school, and over two-thirds of the 18- and 19-year-old youths were not in school.

These are disturbing facts. They represent a sobering failure to reach the educational goals implicit in the democratic creed, and they are indefensible in a society so richly endowed with

material resources as our own. We cannot allow so many of our people to remain so ill equipped either as human beings or as citizens of a democracy.

Great as the total American expenditure for education may seem, we have not been devoting any really appreciable part of our vast wealth to higher education. As table 1 shows, even though in the last 15 years our annual budget for education has risen in number of dollars, it has actually declined in relation to our increasing economic productivity.

The \$1,000,000,000 we have put into our colleges and universities in 1947 was less than one-half of 1 percent of the gross national product, which is the market value of all the goods and services produced in the country in that year.

TABLE 1
Direct Cost of Higher Education and Its Relation to the Gross National Product

Fiscal year	Amount (in millions) ¹	Proportion of gross national product (percent) ²
1932	\$421	0.63
1940	522	.55
1947	1.005	.46

¹Source: General and educational expenditures, not including capital expansion, as reported by U.S. Office of Education.

²Source of gross national product: U.S. Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce.

Barriers to Equal Opportunity

One of the gravest charges to which American society is subject is that of failing to provide a reasonable equality of educational opportunity for its youth. For the great majority of our boys and girls, the kind and amount of education they may hope to attain depends, not on their own abilities, but on the family or community into which they happened to be born or, worse still, on the color of their skin or the religion of their parents.

Economic Barriers

The old, comfortable idea that "any boy can get a college education who has it in him" simply is not true. Low family income, together with the rising costs of education, constitutes an almost impassable barrier to college education for many young people. For some, in fact, the barrier is raised so early in life that it prevents them from attending high school even when free public high schools exist near their homes.

Despite the upward trend in average per capita income for the past century and more, the earnings of a large part of our population are still too low to provide anything but the barest necessities of physical life. It is a distressing fact that in 1945, when the total national income was far greater than in any previous period in our history, half of the children under 18 were growing up in families which had a cash income of \$2,530 or less. The educational significance of these facts is heightened by the relationship that exists between income and birth rate. Fertility is highest in the families with lowest incomes.

In the elementary and secondary schools the effects of these economic conditions are overcome to a considerable extent, though not entirely, by the fact that education is free and at certain ages is compulsory. But this does not hold true at the college level. For a number of years the tendency has been for the college student to bear an increasing share of the cost of his own education. Even in State-supported institutions we have been moving away from the principle of free education to a much greater degree than is commonly supposed.

Under the pressure of rising costs and of a relative lessening of public support, the colleges and universities are having to depend more and more on tuition fees to meet their budgets. As a result, on the average, tuition rates rose about 30 percent from 1939 to 1947.

Nor are tuition costs the whole of it. There are not enough colleges and universities in the country, and they are not distributed evenly enough to bring them within reach of all young people. Relatively few students can attend college in their home communities. So to the expense of a college education for most youth must be added transportation and living costs—but no means a small item.

This economic factor explains in large part why the father's occupation has been found in many studies to rank so high as a determining factor in a young person's college expectancy. A farm laborer earns less than a banker or a doctor, for instance, and so is less able to afford the costs of higher education for his children. The children, moreover, have less inducement to seek a college education because of their family background. In some social circles a college education is often considered a luxury which can be done without, something desirable perhaps, "but not for the likes of us."

The importance of economic barriers to post-high school education lies in the fact that there is little if any relationship between the ability to benefit from a college education and the ability to pay for it. Studies discussed in the volume of this Commission's report, "Equalizing and Expanding Individual Opportunity," show that among children of equally high ability those with fathers in higher-income occupations had greater probability of attending college.

By allowing the opportunity for higher education to depend so largely on the individual's economic status, we are not only denying to millions of young people the chance in life to which they are entitled; we are also depriving the Nation of a vast amount of potential leadership and potential social competence which it sorely needs.

Barrier of a Restricted Curriculum

We shall be denying educational opportunity to many young people as long as we maintain the present orientation of higher education toward verbal skills and intellectual interests. Many young people have abilities of a different kind, and they cannot receive "education commensurate with their native capacities" in colleges and universities that recognize only one kind of educable intelligence.

Traditionally the colleges have sifted out as their special clientele persons possessing verbal aptitudes and a capacity for grasping abstractions. But many other aptitudes—such as social sensitivity and versatility, artistic ability, motor skill and dexterity, and mechanical aptitude and ingenuity—also should be cultivated in a society depending, as ours does, on the minute division of labor and at the same time upon the orchestration of an enormous variety of talents.

If the colleges are to educate the great body of American youth, they must provide programs for the development of other abilities than those involved in academic aptitude, and they cannot continue to concentrate on students with one type of intelligence to the neglect of youth with other talents.

Racial and Religious Barriers

The outstanding example of these barriers to equal opportunity, of course, is the disadvantages suffered by our Negro citizens. The low educational attainments of Negro adults reflect the cumulative effects of a long period of unequal opportunity. In 1940 the schooling of the Negro was significantly below that of whites at every level from the first grade through college. At the college level, the difference is marked; 11 percent of the white population 20 years of age and over had completed at least 1 year of college and almost 5 percent had finished 4 years; whereas for the nonwhites (over 95 percent of whom are Negroes) only a little more than 3 percent had completed at least 1 year of college and less than 1 1/2 percent had completed a full course.

Gains Have Been Made. Noteworthy advances have been made toward eliminating the racial inequalities which in large measure are responsible for this low level of educational achievement by

the Negroes. Between 1900 and 1940 the percentage of Negroes 5 to 20 years of age attending school rose from 31.0 percent to 64.4 percent. And the percentage of Negro youth 15 to 20 years old attending school increased from 17.5 in 1900 to 33.8 in 1940. That differentials still persist, however, is shown in table 5:

TABLE 5
Proportion of Young Persons Attending School, by Age and Color: April 1947¹

Age	Attending school	
	White	Nonwhites (about 95 percent Negro)
	Percent	Percent
6 years of age	67.8	63.4
7 to 9 years of age	97.1	89.2
10 to 13 years of age	98.2	93.7
14 to 17 years of age	82.5	71.9
18 to 19 years of age	28.2	24.2
20 to 24 years of age	11.3	6.7

¹Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Institutions which accept both Negro and non-Negro students do not maintain separate record systems for Negroes, and so data on enrollment of Negroes are restricted to those institutions—usually located in the South—which accept only Negro students. In recent years, since 1932, these institutions have almost tripled their enrollments whereas the institutions for whites or which are unsegregated only about doubled theirs:

TABLE 6
Enrollment of Institutions of Higher Education and Index of Change¹

Year	Enrollments in institutions accepting			
	Negroes only		All other	
	Number	Index of change (1932=100)	Number	Index of change (1932=100)
1932	21,880	100	1,132,237	100
1936	32,628	149	1,175,599	104
1940	41,839	191	1,452,364	128
1947 ²	63,500	290	2,290,500	202

¹Source is resident enrollment as reported by U.S. Office of Education.

²Estimated.

Inequalities Remain. But the numbers enrolled in school do not tell the whole story. Marked as has been the progress in Negro education in recent years, it cannot obscure the very great differences which still persist in educational opportunities afforded the Negro and the non-Negro.

In 17 States and the District of Columbia, segregation of the Negroes in education is established by law.¹ In the *Gaines* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that "if a State furnishes higher education to white residents, it is bound to furnish [within the State] substantially equal advantages to Negro students." Although segregation may not legally mean discrimination as to the quality of the facilities it usually does so in fact. The schools maintained for the Negroes are commonly much inferior to those for the whites. The Negro schools are financed at a pitifully low level, they are often housed in buildings wholly inadequate for the purpose, and many of the teachers are sorely in need of more education themselves. Library facilities are generally poor or lacking altogether, and professional supervision is more a name than a reality.

These facts are supported strongly by a recent study in the District of Columbia. The District's Superintendent of Schools in his 1946-47 report to the Board of Education states that the student-teacher ratios in the schools for Negroes were significantly and consistently higher than for non-Negroes—from the kindergartens through the teachers' colleges.

Segregation lessens the quality of education for the whites as well. To maintain two school systems side by side—duplicating even inadequately the buildings, equipment, and teaching personnel—means that neither can be of the quality that would be possible if all the available resources were devoted to one system, especially not when the States least able financially to support an adequate educational program for their youth are the very ones that are trying to carry a double load.

It must not be supposed that Negro youth living in States in which segregation is not legalized are given the same opportunities as white youth. In these areas economic and social discrimination of various sorts often operates to produce segregation in certain neighborhoods, which are frequently characterized by poorer school buildings, less equipment and less able teachers.

Equality of educational opportunity is not achieved by the mere physical existence of schools; it involves also the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in them.

The Quota System. At the college level a different form of discrimination is commonly practiced. Many colleges and universities, especially in their professional schools, maintain a selective quota system for admission, under which the chance to learn, and thereby to become more useful citizens, is denied to certain minorities, particularly to Negroes and Jews.

This practice is a violation of a major American principle and is contributing to the growing tension in one of the crucial areas of our democracy.

The quote, or *numerous clausus*, is certainly un-American. It is European in origin and application, and we have lately witnessed on that continent the horrors to which, in its logical extension, it can lead. To insist that specialists in any field shall be limited by ethnic quotas is to assume that the Nation is composed of separate and self-sufficient ethnic groups and this assumption America has never made except in the case of its Negro population, where the result is one of the plainest inconsistencies with our national ideal.

The quota system denies the basic American belief that intelligence and ability are present in all ethnic groups, that men of all religious and racial origins should have equal opportunity to fit themselves for contributing to the common life.

Moreover, since the quota system is never applied to all groups in the Nation's population, but only to certain ones, we are forced to conclude that the arguments advanced to justify it are nothing more than rationalizations to cover either convenience or the disposition to discriminate. The quota system cannot be justified on any grounds compatible with democratic principles.

Consequences of Inequalities of Opportunity

These various barriers to educational opportunity involve grave consequences both for the individual and for society.

From the viewpoint of the individual they are denying to millions of young people what the democratic creed assumes to be their birthright: an equal chance with all others to make the most of their native abilities. From the viewpoint of society the barriers mean that far too few of our young people are getting enough preparation for assuming the personal, social, and civic responsibilities of adults living in a democratic society.

It is especially serious that not more of our most talented young people continue their schooling beyond high school in this day when the complexity of life and of our social problems means that we need desperately every bit of trained intelligence we can assemble. The present state of affairs is resulting in far too great a loss of talent—our most precious natural resource in a democracy.

In a country as vast as the United States, with all its regional differences in cultural patterns and economic resources, absolute equality of educational opportunity perhaps may not be reasonably expected. But today the differences that do exist are so great as to compel immediate action.

In communities where the birth rate is low, where the burden of caring for the nurture and education of the oncoming generation is relatively light, where the level of living is high, the advantages of education are extended to youth on more nearly equal terms. But in communities where the birth rate is high, where the economic structure is weak, where the level of living is low, where community and family resources contribute least to intellectual growth, there we support education in niggardly fashion though at great effort.

If over the years we continue to draw the population reserves of the Nation from the most underprivileged areas and families and fail to make good the deficit by adequate educational opportunities, we shall be following a course that is sure to prove disastrous to the level of our culture and to the whole fabric of our democratic institutions.

We have proclaimed our faith in education as a means of equalizing the conditions of men. But there is grave danger that our present policy will make it an instrument for creating the very inequalities it was designed to prevent. If the ladder of educational opportunity rises high at the doors of some youth and scarcely rises at all at the doors of others, while at the same time formal education is made a prerequisite to occupational and social advance, then education may become the means, not of eliminating race and class distinctions, but of deepening and solidifying them.

It is obvious, then, that free and universal access to education, in terms of the interest, ability, and need of the student, must be a major goal in American education.

Toward Equalizing Opportunity

The American people should set as their ultimate goal an educational system in which at no level—high school, college, graduate school, or professional school—will a qualified individual in any part of the country encounter an insuperable economic barrier to the attainment of the kind of education suited to his aptitudes and interests.

This means that we shall aim at making higher education equally available to all young people, as we now do education in the elementary and high schools, to the extent that their capacity warrants a further social investment in their training.

Obviously this desirable realization of our ideal of equal educational opportunity cannot be attained immediately. But if we move toward it as fast as our economic resources permit, it should not lie too far in the future. Technological advances, that are already resulting in phenomenal increases in productivity per worker, promise us a degree of economic well-being that would have seemed wholly Utopian to our fathers. With wise management of our economy, we shall almost certainly be able to support education at all levels far more adequately in the future than we could in the past.

The Commission recommends that steps be taken to reach the following objectives without delay:

1. High school education must be improved and should be provided for all normal youth.

This is a minimal essential. We cannot safely permit any of our citizens for any reason other than incapacity, to stop short of a high school education or its equivalent. To achieve the purpose of such education, however, it must be improved in facilities and in the diversity of its curriculum. Better high school education is essential, both to raise the caliber of students entering college and to provide the best training possible for those who end their formal education with the twelfth grade.

2. **The time has come to make education through the fourteenth grade available in the same way that high school education is now available.**

This means that tuition-free education should be available in public institutions to all youth for the traditional freshman and sophomore years or for the traditional 12-year junior college course.

To achieve this, it will be necessary to develop much more extensively than at present such opportunities as are now provided in local communities by the 2-year junior college, community institute, community college, or institute of arts and sciences. The name used does not matter, though community college seems to describe these schools best; the important thing is that the services they perform be recognized and vastly extended.

Such institutions make post-high-school education available to a much larger percentage of young people than otherwise could afford it. Indeed, as discussed in the volume of this Commission's report "Organizing Higher Education," such community colleges probably will have to carry a large part of the responsibility for expanding opportunities in higher education.

3. **The time has come to provide financial assistance to competent students in the tenth through fourteenth grades who would not be able to continue their education without such assistance.**

Tuition costs are not the major economic barrier to education, especially in college. Costs of supplies, board, and room, and other living needs are great. Even many high-school students are unable to continue in school because of these costs.

Arrangements must be made, therefore, to provide additional financial assistance for worthy students who need it if they are to remain in school. Only in this way can we counteract the effects of family incomes so low that even tuition-free schooling is a financial impossibility for their children. Only in this way can we make sure that all who are to participate in democracy are adequately prepared to do so.

4. **The time has come to reverse the present tendency of increasing tuition and other student fees in the senior college beyond the fourteenth year, and in both graduate and professional schools, by lowering tuition costs in publicly controlled colleges and by aiding deserving students through inaugurating a program of scholarships and fellowships.**

Only in this way can we be sure that economic and social barriers will not prevent the realization of the promise that lies in our most gifted youth. Only in this way can we be certain of developing for the common good all the potential leadership our society produces, no matter in what social or economic stratum it appears.

5. **The time has come to expand considerably our program of adult education, and to make more of it the responsibility of our colleges and universities.**

The crisis of the time and the rapidly changing conditions under which we live make it especially necessary that we provide a continuing and effective educational program for adults as well as youth. We can in this way, perhaps, make up some of the educational deficiencies of the past, and also in a measure counteract the pressures and distractions of adult life that all too often make the end of formal schooling the end of education too.

6. The time has come to make public education at all levels equally accessible to all, without regard to race, creed, sex or national origin.

If education is to make the attainment of a more perfect democracy one of its major goals, it is imperative that it extend its benefits to all on equal terms. It must renounce the practices of discrimination and segregation in educational institutions as contrary to the spirit of democracy. Educational leaders and institutions should take positive steps to overcome the conditions which at present obstruct free and equal access to educational opportunities. Educational programs everywhere should be aimed at undermining and eventually eliminating the attitudes that are responsible for discrimination and segregation—at creating instead attitudes that will make education freely available to all.

Number Who Should Receive Higher Education

Achieving these immediate objectives necessarily will require a tremendous expansion of our educational enterprise at the college level.

It will be noted that many of the Commission's projects focus upon the year 1960. There are several important reasons why the Commission has chosen to look this far ahead. First of all, in the President's letter of appointment, the Commission was asked to direct its energies toward the investigation of long-term policy issues in American higher education. The Commission itself selected the terminal date of 1960 since it was felt that manageable data could be procured for studies up to this point. The basic consideration of population data weighted heavily in the selection. Individuals who will be enrolled in colleges in 1960 through 1964 have already been born, and thus the Commission has a tangible figure with which to make its projections.

The Commission believes that in 1960 a minimum of 4,600,000 young people should be enrolled in nonprofit institutions for education beyond the traditional twelfth grade. Of this total number, 2,500,000 should be in the thirteenth and fourteenth grades (junior college level); 1,500,000 in the fifteenth and sixteenth grades (senior college level); and 600,000 in graduate and professional schools beyond the first degree.

In thus appraising future enrollment in institutions of post-high school education, this Commission has not sought to project the future on the basis of the past nor to predict annual enrollments over the period 1948 to 1960. It frankly recognizes that such a forecast would be subject to unpredictable world-wide social and economic conditions.

Education for Free Men

American colleges and universities have assumed a huge task in the last half century. To have opened their doors for so many of our youth was difficult enough; to have done so at a time when the complexity of society was increasing rapidly and its pattern was shifting, so that the ends of education itself were subject to continual revision, was to attempt the nearly impossible. The wonder is, not that the colleges have fallen short in some respects, but that they have achieved so considerable a degree of success.

This is no cause for complacency, however. If still greater expansion in number of students is to be undertaken in a period of still greater uncertainty, higher education must act quickly to bring its policies and programs more closely into line with the social purposes it professes to serve.

The Need for General Education

Present college programs are not contributing adequately to the quality of students' adult lives either as workers or as citizens. This is true in large part because the unity of liberal education has been splintered by overspecialization.

For half a century and more the curriculum of the liberal arts college has been expanding and disintegrating to an astounding degree. The number of courses has so multiplied that no student could take all of them, or even a majority of them, in a lifetime. In one small mid-western college, for example, the number of courses offered increased from 67 in 1900 to 296 in 1930. During the same period the liberal arts college of one of the great private universities lengthened its list of courses from 960 to 1,897.

This tendency to diversify the content of what was once an integrated liberal education is in part the consequence of the expansion of the boundaries of knowledge. New advances in every direction have added more and more subjects to the liberal arts curriculum and have at the same time limited the area of knowledge a single course could cover. This development is at once the parent and the child of specialization.

Specialization is a hallmark of our society, and its advantages to mankind have been remarkable. But in the educational program it has become a source both of strength and of weakness. Filtering downward from the graduate and professional school levels, it has taken over the undergraduate years, too, and in the more extreme instances it has made of the liberal arts college little more than another vocational school, in which the aim of teaching is almost exclusively preparation for advanced study in one or another specialty.

This tendency has been fostered, if not produced, by the training of college teachers in the graduate school, where they are imbued with the single ideal of an ever-narrowing specialism.

The trend toward specialization has been reinforced by the movement toward democratization of higher education. The young people appearing in growing numbers on college campuses have brought with them widely diverse purposes, interests, capacities, and academic backgrounds. Some expect to enter one of the old-line professions; others want training in one of the numerous branches of agriculture, industry or commerce. Some consider college education a natural sequel to high school; others seek it as a road to higher social status.

The net result of the situation is that the college student is faced with a bewildering array of intensive courses from which to make up his individual program. To secure a reasonably comprehensive grasp of his major field, he must in some cases spend as much as half or more of his time in that one department. The other half he scatters among courses in other departments which, designed for future specialists in those fields, are so restricted in scope that the student can gain from them only a fragmentary view of the subject. He, therefore, leaves college unacquainted with some of the fundamental areas of human knowledge and without the integrated view of human experience that is essential both for personal balance and for social wisdom.

Today's college graduate may have gained technical or professional training in one field of work or another, but is only incidentally, if at all, made ready for performing his duties as a man, a parent, and a citizen. Too often his is "educated" in that he has acquired competence in some particular occupation, yet falls short of that human wholeness and civic conscience which the cooperative activities of citizenship require.

The failure to provide any core of unity in the essential diversity of higher education is a cause for grave concern. A society whose members lack a body of common experience and common knowledge is a society without a fundamental culture; it tends to disintegrate into a mere aggregation of individuals. Some community of values, ideas, and attitudes is essential as a cohesive force in this age of minute division of labor and intense conflict of special interests.

The crucial task of higher education today, therefore, is to provide a unified general education for American youth. Colleges must find the right relationship between specialized training on the one hand, aiming at a thousand different careers, and the transmission of a common cultural heritage toward a common citizenship on the other.

There have already been many efforts to define this relationship. Attempts to reach conclusions about the ends and means of general education have been a major part of debate and experimentation in higher education for at least two decades.

"General education" is the term that has come to be accepted for those phases of nonspecialized and nonvocational learning which should be the common experience of all educated men and women.

General education should give to the student the values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that will equip him to live rightly and well in a free society. It should enable him to identify, interpret, select, and build into his own life those components of his cultural heritage that contribute richly to understanding and appreciation of the world in which he lives. It should therefore embrace ethical values, scientific generalizations, and aesthetic conceptions, as well as an understanding of the purposes and character of the political, economic and social institutions that men have devised.

But the knowledge and understanding which general education aims to secure whether drawn from the past or from a living present, are not to be regarded as ends in themselves. They are means to a more abundant personal life and a stronger, freer social order.

Thus conceived, general education is not sharply distinguished from liberal education; the two differ mainly in degree, not in kind. General education undertakes to redefine liberal education in terms of life's problems as men face them, to give it human orientation and social direction, to invest it with content that is directly relevant to the demands of contemporary society. General education is liberal education with its matter and method shifted from its original aristocratic intent to the service of democracy. General education seeks to extend to all men the benefits of an education that liberates.

This purpose calls for a unity in the program of studies that a uniform system of courses cannot supply. The unity must come, instead, from a consistency of aim that will infuse and harmonize all teaching and all campus activities.

Note

1. In the case of *Mendez v. Westminster School District*, the segregation of students of Mexican ancestry in the Westminster, Calif., school district, on the alleged grounds that because of their ancestry such students have language difficulties, was held illegal. The U.S. district court which heard the case held that segregation is unconstitutional under the Federal Constitution. On appeal by the Westminster school district, the U.S. circuit court of appeals limited its affirmance of the district court's decision by holding that the specific statutes involved were illegal under the California law.