Accomplishment, Interest, Obligation

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It is only fair to admit here at the beginning of this article that I accepted the invitation to write it with some hesitation, since at the time I had no particular axe to grind.

The reader, therefore, should not expect to find anything so entertaining as a proposal that the Board of Governors be hanged in effigy or that coeducational colleges for upper-classmen be instituted next fall.

However, having been a Rice undergraduate at one time and having lived and worked in rather close contact with Rice students for the past seven years, I should like to say a few things about academic motivation.

MANY OF US as students have asked ourselves, “Why should I beat my brains out here at Rice when I can go somewhere else and have a lot of fun while getting a degree?” This question of why one should work hard really does deserve serious consideration.

Some of the main reasons why students work might be as follows: Fear of not making a decent living after college, parental demands that one get a degree, desire for economic and social betterment, desire to excel others in achievement, pride of accomplishment, interest in the material that is learned, and a feeling of obligation to develop and use one’s talents.

I SHOULD LIKE to say some things about accomplishment, interest, and obligation.

Learning is always an accomplishment, and it should particularly be recognized as such on the Rice campus.

A freshman’s first set of 3’s and 4’s may look very disappointing in comparison with the flock of A’s he made in high school, but only a little reflection is required to show that the poorer grades here stand for much more real accomplishment.

Interest in the material that is being taught is a necessity for a high level of accomplishment. Interest is a bit difficult to create from nothing, but it is worth noting that interest often accompanies accomplishment even when it has not preceded the accomplishment.

AN OBLIGATION to develop and use the talents that have been given to us should underlie all the other motives that we may have for doing a good job.

We cannot pass this obligation on to others, nor can we avoid it. Our abilities must be developed fully if we are to serve as we should ourselves, our families, our communities, our nation, and, ultimately, the God who gave us those abilities.

The vast majority of us here simply have too much potential to neglect or slight this development.

PLEASE DO NOT assume that I am arguing that only the students who are making all 1’s are doing their work well. In view of the differences that exist in kinds and degrees of talent, we all know that some persons who are making 3 averages are doing better jobs than others who rank high on the dean’s list.

Those of us who take the New Testament seriously should remember that in the parable of the talents the criterion for commendation of the servants was not the absolute amount that they gained, but rather what they did with what they were given.

Also, please do not think that I am condemning extracurricular activities. Many of these can very definitely contribute significantly to a person’s total development when he allotss the proper amount of time to them.