What Is Grad Student’s Role?

Dr. Bernard Atkinson, Assistant Professor of Chemical Engineering, received his Ph.D. from the University of Manchester in England. Although he is new to the faculty this year, Dr. Atkinson studied at Rice last year as a post-doctoral fellow.—Ed.

By BERNARD ATKINSON
Chemical Engineering Dept.

Much has been said and written and much has been done to provide the undergraduate with facilities for broadening his outlook and developing his personality during the years in college.

However, once a man graduate he becomes, as far as the life of the university is concerned, something of an outcast, to be filed away in the department of his choosing and allowed to come up for air only when his degree is awarded.

The problem of the new graduate student is more complex than that of his undergraduate counterpart.

IF THE CURRENT, and I believe healthy, trend continues, he will be encouraged to do graduate work at some school other than his alma mater. This, however, creates problems and places a special responsibility on the university.

The position of the new graduate student is difficult. He arrives on a new campus where he is a stranger; he is unfamiliar with the techniques, procedures and philosophy of his new department, and this in itself presents a problem.

In all probability he is bored with undergraduate campus activity and is looking for pastures new. He will probably take a cheap apartment close to campus in the strange city and pass his days and evenings working and trotting back and forth.

HIS ACQUAINTANCES will be from his own department and will probably remain so, apart from occasional contacts as a result of his course work.

There are those who will accept and claim all the students’ time, and testify that this is the way to dedication.

The question here is: dedication to science or the dollar?

Since a post-graduate degree now opens the door to a higher earnings bracket, who can be sure? If the latter is the answer, the dedication is superfluous.

IT IS THE responsibility of any educational establishment that wishes to be honored by the name “University” to come to terms with this matter. The re-

(Continued on Page 6)
SOUND-OFF—

(Continued from Page 4)

responsibility of Rice is particularly burdensome as it looks forward to a larger graduate program, because here we are at the crossroads.

We can either go one way and become a research institute—a high class production line of knowledge-saturated bodies with a dollar market value—or the other more hazardous way to produce well-developed, well-taught, mature human beings.

This is not to say that we need provide extensive facilities for so-called liberal arts education or graduate students or a communal television center or graduate students’ rest rooms to promote togetherness.

WHAT WE NEED to provide are such facilities and such a climate of opinion that will promote an interest in the university as a worthwhile entity, not a place simply to sweat and slave, but a place where ideas and activities can germinate—a place for dissent, not apathy.

It is doubtful whether the mythical university or ‘ivory tower’ ever existed, but it is certain that it does not exist today. With the pressures of modern learning and activity we are unable to take the more leisurely approach.

We can, however, by the promotion of association, learn and benefit from the experience of others. What are required are the necessary facilities.

WHAT ARE THESE? Materially, graduate accommodation, perhaps even married student accommodation: Failing this, eating facilities or a graduate student club.

The less tangible side requires effort on the part of the faculty to promote closer staff-student contact at an informal extra-curricular level.