Interdisciplinary approach

Symposium disorganized success

By DON DES JARLAIS
Thresher Staff Writer

Rice University is one of the few universities in the nation with an integrated interdisciplinary program in the behavioral sciences.

In keeping with this approach to the study of behavior Rice last week presented a symposium entitled, "The Study of Personality: An Interdisciplinary Appraisal." The symposium featured several eminent speakers, notably Margaret Mead.

Dr. Edward Norbeck, the director of the symposium, must be given credit for a significant step in Rice's continuing improvement in the social sciences. The symposium as a symposium, however, was not without organizational mistakes.

Many more people attended than were expected, a mark of success that caused many of those who came to be unable to hear or see what was happening. After the first session, the symposium was moved from Hamman Hall to the RMC, with closed circuit television for the overflow in Hamman, but the reception was only intermittent.

Each speaker was allotted twenty minutes for the presentation of his paper, which was not nearly long enough for the more interesting speakers. Too often a speaker would omit the development of a major point because "I do not have time to go into that."

A lack of organization and difficulties in allotting the proper time to each speaker are perhaps inevitable in any symposium, but one feels that Rice, as a school desiring to increase its prestige in this field, could have done better.

A book composed of the various papers presented at the symposium will be published within a year. This book will contain the full contents of the papers and should be an important contribution to interdisciplinary research in personality.

The symposium can then be considered as a success in the quality of the speakers attracted and in the book to be published, but not as good as it could have been in providing information to those who attended.

"The Study of Personality: An Interdisciplinary Appraisal," was a significant advance in increasing Rice's reputation in the behavioral sciences. It was good, not perfect, and more such steps are needed.