Exchange Student Describes University Life In England

By ALBERT LOWEY-BALL

Life in English universities is markedly different from that in the United States, according to Lindsay Buchanan, exchange student from Trinity College, Cambridge.

Each Cambridge college is considerably more independent than those at Rice, being linked to the other colleges by tradition and a central university administration which sets the entrance qualifications and provides a coordinating framework for the school as a whole.

A Master, designated by the Queen in Trinity's case, presides over the college in an arbitrary but benign manner, ably assisted by a set of Fellows. This latter group is made up of professors and, furthermore, is self-perpetuating in a manner similar to that of the Rice Trustees.

A MEMBER of the Fellows is assigned as a Tutor to the would-be student. The former arranges for an entrance exam, holds an interview and accepts or rejects his prospect. The Tutor is also in charge of his student's "general behavior."

The student is accepted as an adult, and treated as such. The student is also assigned a Director of Studies, who helps in course selection and a Supervisor, who loosely keeps track of his charge's study habits by means of a weekly meeting. Both Director and Supervisor are Fellows.

Then, the new student, equipped with a lecture schedule, plunges fully into the life of the college with all the hazards and rewards that it entails. Despite his three mentors, the student is now almost entirely on his own, and a considerable amount of self-discipline must be applied. His undergraduate period lasts but three years, with exams at the end of each year; and if he flunks, he's out of school.

Thus, the undergraduate is academically made accountable to the university only once per year. This system makes for self-reliance and is certainly successful: witness the international reputations of both Cambridge and Oxford.

THE CAMBRIDGE academic year is divided into three 8-week periods, separated from each other by summer, Christmas, and Easter. As human nature would have it, the first two terms witness a notable prevalence of "social activities," to which the grimness of the third, due to the proximity of exams, is markedly contrasted.

Buchanan is attending Rice under the auspices of the Abraham Student Foundation. Living this year in Baker College, he is taking several economics and business administration courses, and auditing several others. He already has an engineering degree.

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