The limitations must be recognized

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After reading the articles written by the two college presidents in The Thresher of last week, the first question which came to my mind was “Why do they do it?” Why, after all, do they bother to spend the vast amount of time and make the sacrifices of emotion and shining transcripts to something which appears hopeless?

The answer, I believe, is this. For eight years the college system has been sustained by the preponderence of hope over reality. Some students were willing to give to the college system because it was a concept which seemed to offer a new dimension in the University experience by integrating education, cultural and social activities into the usual mechanics of dormitory living.

Faith Not Enough

The two articles made it extremely clear that this hope has given way to despair and disillusionment. Eight short years have passed since the college system was begun. In the last three years it has become increasingly clear to a number of students working with the colleges that the system in which we still have so much faith neither ennobles nor enriches the individual’s life at Rice to any degree corresponding to our hope for it. Simple faith and hope are no longer enough.

And so here we are, apparently at rest in a position where few people seem happy. This unhappiness, I might add, is not confined to the students. Those faculty members who were some of the most active in the past and might have been available to work and to make the actuality approach the concept now accept the colleges as part of the Rice landscape, much as they accept Razor and Anderson Halls and William Marsh Rice’s statue.

Cluttered With Obstacles
This foreclosure on the future of the college system within the established lines of development has become so much a part of the general atmosphere of Rice that it is second nature. And in this situation lies much of the real tragedy of the present condition of the college system.

What are they? Presidents Morrison and King tooted on a number of them, such as a lack of funds, and a lack of autonomy. One of the masters called one of the key problems the fact that “no college has a sustained, high percentage commitment by the students.”

Mr. Morrison indicated that another problem was the lack of a sustained, high percentage commitment by the administration and Board of Governors. All of these are problems. No one of them alone is completely central.

Possible Solution

What, then, is to be done? There are two possibilities: (1) College members should forget high hopes which so long sustained their participation in the college system and concentrate simply on the routine matters of dormitory government. In other words, forget the college system entirely, admittedly a step backward and no real choice.

(2) College members should adopt a program whereby hope is brought into line with possibility. This involves the recognition of certain given. The first, and foremost is that, barring any sweeping institutional changes or conversions of existing physical plants, the colleges will never become what it has so long been hoped they will become — organizations which integrate the educational, cultural and the social into the daily act of living.

Admit Limitations

What must be recognized is the limited existing commitment to the colleges on the part of the University, the proprietary attitudes which permanent heads of any organization (in this case, the masters) take toward the organizations with which they are associated, and the general acceptance of disillusionment on the part of the faculty and the students.

With these givens firmly in hand, the college system can turn again, recognizing its limited resources, to the individual members. From the experience of those who now live in (or out of) the colleges can come knowledge of the problems which will be faced by those who next year will be moving in.

Within limits the college system can continue to proceed slowly, but there is no guaran-