Patience must prevail until telephone improvements arrive

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Telephone service on campus will not "greatly improve" until the installation of a new switchboard in the administration building which is currently under construction, according to Mrs. Dolly of the personnel office. She said the proposed equipment will be larger and more modern, enabling the switchboard to handle incoming calls more efficiently.

Don Lamb, President of Wiess College, said that the situation was far too complex to be solved by the addition of a larger switchboard. In a study of Southwest Conference schools last year, Wiess College discovered that the telephone situation is a major problem not only at Rice, but at most other schools.

35 Dimes a Call
It was found in the course of the study that the cost of maintaining a switchboard in Wiess for the year was approximately $6,000. Since only fifteen members of the college did not have access to a private phone, it was estimated to cost about $3.50 for each phone call put through the college switchboard.

The problem of finances was further complicated this year by the addition of secretaries in each of the men's colleges except Will Rice. The cost of these secretaries above the previous expense of maintaining a joint master's office has made a serious dent in the college general budgets.

Lamb further explained that the colleges were each given the money by the University to provide for sixty hours per week of student help under the government's work-study program. These hours were to be allocated as the colleges felt was best.

Operator's Funds
Dean of Undergraduate Affairs M. V. McEnany explained that it was thought that these funds would allow for switchboard operators in the colleges for whatever hours the individual colleges deemed necessary.

This arrangement allows the Wiess switchboard to be kept open only until 10:30 on week-day nights, but the previous high proportion of private phones made this seem adequate. Lamb feels that it has proved to be sufficient service.

Baker and Hanssen decided upon similar plans, with Will Rice deciding against hiring a college secretary so that the money could be used to pay Mr. Wills, their residence manager, to keep the switchboard open until 12 at night.

This arrangement in the men's colleges was complicated by the construction work this summer when a large number of telephone conduits were inadvertently removed in Baker, Hanssen and Will Rice. For that reason, it has only been possible to install private phones to one-fourth of the rooms in those colleges.

Overload
This added strain on the original switchboard arrangement is the cause of the difficulty often encountered in reaching resident members of those colleges. This difficulty reduces the percentage of those with available private telephones in the men's colleges from 90% last year to an estimated 60% at the present time.

In order to alleviate the situation, a proposal was made for a common answering service for the men's colleges with messages sent out every hour or so to those who had received calls.

Dean McEnany has explained that this plan was not put into effect because it was agreed to be very inefficient.

Patience
Mrs. Dolly and several university switchboard operators stated that the main switchboard is now adequate at most times to handle the number of incoming calls.

One student operator said, "Everyone calls at the same time and expects his call to be answered immediately. But one person on switchboard is ordinarily sufficient."

The difficulty with the whole arrangement seems to lie with the college switchboards instead of the main board in Lovett Hall. It has been suggested that a Centrex system, similar to that used at the University of Texas, might be a more efficient way of handling the telephone situation since so many students have private phones anyway.

With a Centrex system, telephones would be placed in each room or suite of the colleges, enabling students to call outside of the University directly with their phones or to call other campus telephones without going through a switchboard.