Dean Praises Student Ideals, College’s ‘Spiritual Influence’

By EUGENE KEILIN

“The university never wholly loses its spiritual influence on the young men and women who come to it seeking knowledge,” Dean of Students S. W. Higginbotham told an Autry House audience as a speaker in the continuing series, “The University and Its Work.”

The Dean pictured a dedication on the part of the university to the service of humanity and of the students to the pursuit of truth.

“THE STUDENTS,” he said, “are basically idealistic, placing exaggerated emphasis of the absence of restraint.” The Dean attributed this feeling to the student’s dedication to democracy.

In general, the Dean gave his wholehearted approval to student idealism. “At no other time are people quite so fine and attractive as when they come to college,” he said.

The Dean pictured a student’s alma mater as the “repository of you as you would like to remember yourselves.” The student, he said, “glories in the pursuit of truth” while in school, but must graduate into a world “far less idealistic than a university.”

THE UNIVERSITY, the Dean said, is a community where the student may live a life “devoted not to the practical but to ideas and to relations with his fellow students.” The experience at a university is for most students their first real independence from their families and is a period of “growing responsibility and dedication to high purposes.”

On the other hand, the Dean said, the world which the student enters upon graduation is a mixture of “Hollywood versions of sex relations,” the “tawdriness of Madison Avenue art” and a patriotism which is often mere “formulistic ritual.”

IN relation to his picture of the ideal university, the Dean was generally satisfied with Rice, but he was willing to admit and make some criticisms.

“There is a tendency,” he said, “for the professor to think in terms of reproducing himself.”

The instructor should realize that he is preparing his students for a wide variety of vocations and should react accordingly.

Along these lines, the Dean observed that a “law school might be a desirable addition to Rice because it would bring a type of mind somewhat missing on the campus—philosophical, quizzical, curious about society outside the campus. This attitude would be beneficial, particularly to the humanities.”

IT WAS APPARENT from his prepared remarks that the Dean was concerned about relations between students, and is was not surprising when, in answer to a question, he remarked, “The students don’t speak to one another. This above all things on campus worries me.”

As king about Rice’s admissions policies, the Dean commented, “Many of the points of friction in inter-student relationships could be avoided by a broader range of abilities.

“As long as our admission is selective,” he continued, “we can’t justify ourselves from a social point of view unless we provide educational leadership, although we must not indulge in fads.”

THE DEAN was particularly

(Continued on Page 10)
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(Continued from Page 1)

cconcerned and obviously moved by the two suicides of Rice students in the last two years. “We have had some very shocking things recently,” he said. “I think the university or somebody has failed to fulfill an essential need.”

He advised that the Board, too, was concerned, and had the matter under study. One possibility was a counseling service for Rice students, perhaps working with Baylor Medical School.