Faculty Members Confront Issues In Rice’s Growth, Development

Rice Profs Chart University Future For Forum Panel

By BILL SCHNITT
Thrasher Reporter

"The University should give students the maximum opportunity to pursue their own interests . . ."—Dr. Frank Hole, Anthropology.

“We must start with structural changes . . . in the curriculum . . ."—Dr. Walter Isle, English.

“The undergraduate must suffer when we build strong graduate programs . . ."—Dr. Louis Mackey, Philosophy.

“No one is really facing the problem of undergraduate education . . .”—Dr. Charles Neu, History.

“The big problem is bringing the Great Society . . . to Rice University . . .”—Bill Broyles, Student Association President.

These statements were made by the four Rice professors and Moderator Bill Broyles in a panel discussion held Friday night at the Chemistry Lecture Hall. Sponsored by the Forum Committee, the discussion of “Rice’s Future as a University” was the first of two student-faculty meetings, according to Forum Chairman Paul Brewer.

Few Escape

Few aspects of academic life escaped the attention of the panel, as it focused on the problems relating to University growth, curriculum revision, faculty apathy, and administrative obstinacy.

The object of a considerable discussion was Rice’s Ten Year Plan, which promises a substantial increase in the number of faculty members, students, and graduates by 1975—with the graduate enrollment increasing at a “somewhat faster” pace than that of undergraduates.

Reflects Wrongly

Dr. Neu said that this expected growth “reflects a balance between undergraduates and graduate development. This assumption is wrong.” He recommended a cut-back on graduate studies so that the University could explore “exciting and unique” programs at the...
Dr. Mackey observed that it is the University's goal to "Grow and achieve distinction" by the development of its graduate division. The student must "suffer," he said, because "we invariably begin to interpret undergraduates as graduate students. This is not the proper way to treat undergraduates."

**Disparity Noted**

The panel noted that there was considerable disparity between students' interest in instituting academic reforms, and the claims of the Ten Year Plan, which reads: "The location of Rice in a region relatively untouched by academic tradition favors innovation and originality in its pursuit of excellence."

"We may be in such a region," said Dr. Isle, "but something is forcing our innovative efforts."

**Too Difficult**

Dr. Hole explained that it would be too difficult to "re- vaccine the curriculum because it would mean 'across-the-board revision' of courses—a burden some change for the faculty and the administrators."

Dr. Ingersoll denied. He contended that science and math requirements for humanities students could be revised without a "radical shift" in departments of the University.

The alleged resistance to change, according to Dr. Mackey, should be attributed to administrators who are contented with the present structure of the University. "The faculty hasn't gone on strike . . ." he said, "and from a managerial standpoint, things are in fine shape."

**Questions Prompt**

Questions from the floor prompted the panel to discuss the faculty's role in University development. One student asked why Rice doesn't have a permanent faculty to aid undergraduate education.

Dr. Hole replied that there is the Committee of Undergraduate Affairs. But he observed that "it's never the first step and last step. Committees are only as good as the people on them."

**Not Interested**

Dr. Mackey admitted that many faculty members are "uninterested" in committee work; even those who do serve on committees have a limited amount of time, and are scholars first, "not administrators."

"In the long run," he said, "faculty members prefer not to write committee reports."

The panel was concerned with what the University's goal should be in the image of Harvard or Yale, or whether the University's development should parallel that of the smaller institutions, Oberlin and Swarthmore, for example.

Dr. Neu noted that when universities are "too quick to interpret the cursory," undergraduate courses tend to grow larger and larger, and become more "impersonal."

**Class Size Problem**

"Harvard and Yale," he said, "have great problems with the size of classes.

One student, lamenting the lack of 'intellectual excitement' at Rice, asked if the situation was very much different at one of the smaller, liberal arts colleges.

"The undergraduate atmosphere at Williams would be more intense," replied Dr. Neu, "and it would be involved in smaller programs."

**Harvard Reviewed**

The value of the Harvard-type "system" came under consideration when a request was made. Dr. Hole, Dr. Isle reviewed some of his undergraduate experiences at Harvard.

He recalled "depressions and difficulties" similar to those of Rice student, but felt there were important structural differences in the curriculum which mitigated the problems of the Harvard undergraduate.

"For a start, they were hard enough," he said, "but the fifth would have been unimaginable."

**Less Science**

He also noted that liberal arts degrees at Harvard were required to take only one natural science course, and similarly, science majors needed only one humanities course.

While the entire panel agreed that changes were desirable, it was noted that there were difficulties in implementing structural reforms, failed to generate unanimous enthusiasm among the four professors.

**Lacked Support**

The Woodward Plan "failed" because it lacked the support of "eighty per cent of the faculty," according to Dr. Hole.

Dr. Neu replied that the Plan was really a "small step" that there was never any "pressure" to get it out of committee. "The University might get foundation support for unique undergraduate programs," he further noted, "but no one is even exploring the possibility."

**Radical Departure**

Dr. Isle acknowledged certain merits of the Woodward Plan, but noted that it was a "radical departure" from the present curriculum.

And Dr. Mackey recognized the contention of the Plan's critics that "everyone needs to be detailed." He conceded that it should be further investigated, but did not see the