Wischmeyer describes Eastern college system

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Baker master Carl Wischmeyer stressed the importance of adequate financial backing in the successful operation of a residential college and touched on the controversial on-campus liquor issue in a Tuesday night discussion of his recent visit to the colleges and houses of Yale and Harvard.

About forty-five people, including University President Kenneth Pitzer and Deans M. V. McNenany and Paul Pfeiffer, listened as Wischmeyer gave a history of the two Ivy League colleges, discussed their financial bases, and described the role of the master, the status of education, and other topics such as the food services there.

Liquor

Wischmeyer admitted that on-campus liquor parties are permitted but referred to the arrangement at Harvard and Yale, as an “uneasy situation.”

Maintaining the position he took regarding the Baker proposal to allow such social activities, he claimed that the Eastern universities are turning their backs on the issue and not adhering to the law.

Specifically, he pointed out that two “incidents” have involved drunken students with off-campus authorities in the past two years. Deans at the two schools, he pointed out, generally have “working arrangements” with the regular police of New Haven and Cambridge.

“This is indirectness,” Wischmeyer added. “They are not facing up to the problems.” He has recommended in the past that Rice students work toward a lower legal drinking age in Texas.

Wischmeyer began his speech by sketching the history of the inception of the houses and colleges. He noted that the Yale corporation originally hesitated and regarded the proposal as distinctly “romantic.”

While Yale hesitated, Harvard pirated the benefactor and established a house system. Yale followed, and by 1928 the two had created housing systems based essentially on British models.

Speed?

Rice administrators, in contrast, first conceived the idea of residential colleges in 1912, and in the 1950’s, when the decision to create the colleges was made, it was implemented with what Wischmeyer called “lightning speed.”

The Baker master pointed out that in the 1920’s, as now, it was not “a priori obvious that a college system is a way to run a boat. Colleges cost money, and this means donors.”

The masters of the Ivy colleges, he pointed out, have quite different functions than Rice masters. At Yale, for instance, the head of a college usually has more than $9,000 to bring outstanding speakers to campus.

He is divorced from disciplinary matters and freed to exercise his ingenuity in presenting programs.

The Yale master, he continued, is also assisted by a college dean who has comprehensive control over academic registration, disciplinary matters, bookkeeping chores, and counseling duties.

Senior tutors in Harvard houses have much the same duties as Yale deans, except that one central counseling service handles all the Harvard students.

The Yale and Harvard masters, with both secretarial and master’s offices in the residence, have much better physical facilities than their counterparts at Rice, Wischmeyer pointed out. The masters there are also largely relieved of teaching duties.

Affluent Fellows

Similarly, faculty fellows who live in the Yale houses are provided suites with a living room, study, kitchen, and bath.

The Yale houses serve an educational function by sponsoring about six small seminars each. Wischmeyer added that such programs result in conflict between colleges and departments over faculty manpower.

At the end of his prepared lecture, Wischmeyer added that student government is practically non-existent in the Yale colleges and Harvard houses. The functions performed by student government here are carried out by “benevolent dictator” administrators.

Non-parochial

The climates there are entirely different, he said, and students seem to be more interested in national affairs.

Wischmeyer also pointed out that one of the nine Harvard houses is for non-residents. It was organized several years ago and provides a few rooms for students who wish to spend the night on campus.

At Yale, however, only about 100 students are currently permitted to live off the campus.

Discussing the food services at the universities, Wischmeyer admitted that students “eat pretty well,” but menu monotony is apparently still a problem.