Admissions Policy Examined; Improvements Are Suggested

BY LES ARNOLD

This year students seem to have taken a great interest in the quality and effectiveness of the Rice education. One aspect of this subject is the admissions procedure by which new freshmen with their eager faces are admitted each fall.

There is no doubt that the quality of the student body has a great deal to do with the quality of the education the students receive while they are here. Both of these things are related to the general quality and prestige of the school as a whole. This article will not present any cure-all suggestions for improving admissions and thereby improving the University all at once. It does explain the difficulty of trying to pick a new freshman class and it tries to indicate particular problems in the process.

An application to be admitted as a freshman to Rice includes the high school transcript, the College Board scores and writing sample (a new innovation), detailed evaluation sheets filled out by high school teachers and counselors, and a four page application form that includes questions on why he chose his major subject, his family's financial condition, and his extracurricular activities.

MOST OF THE applicants are interviewed by Mr. Bernard Giles, Director of Admissions and Lecturer on Economics, or some other member of the Admission Committee.

About 2000 or more high school seniors apply to Rice each year. About 1200 fail to pass the minimum requirements with respect to College Board scores or high school records. From the remaining 800 the Committee tries to pick the 400 or so who are best qualified to spend the next four years here. In general, "best qualified" means those students who will contribute the most to and benefit the most from the Rice education; in other words those who will do the best here in the next four years. As every one is aware, including the Committee, this process is by no means perfect.

IN THE FIRST place the Committee is faced with the problem of attempting to evaluate a human being's capabilities and potentialities from the written answers to an application form, high school course grades, and some multiple guests test scores. Using the information they have the Committee does all they can to get a complete picture of the applicant, but it is practically impossible to perfectly represent as complex a thing as a Rice applicant with answers on a form or test scores. Personalities cannot be truly expressed in a static form such as these.

The information is generally a good indication as to the nature of the applicant, but it is far from perfect. Each applicant is interviewed, but this interview is often seen by the majority of the Committee as the written report of the interviewer. In the opinion of this writer many of those qualities which determine whether a student fails out or graduates are inherently impossible to measure with either grades or aptitude test scores. These qualities are variously called motivation, interest, determination, seriousness, maturity, or responsibility. Psychologists have not developed fool-proof tests to measure these qualities in people yet.

THE COMMITTEE is aware of this difficulty and makes an attempt to evaluate these intangibles in the applicants. Each applicant is asked to write briefly on why he chose his tentative major. References are asked to say whether the applicant is primarily a grade seeker or a dedicated student. (This is one of 2 pages of questions.) Reading habits are investigated in the interview. This year, as part of the College Boards, the applicant is required to write an impromptu theme in one hour.

In addition to revealing something about the applicants' personality these last two things investigate abilities which have a great deal to do with a student's success at college, the ability to read rapidly and well, and the ability to express himself clearly and correctly. (One member of the Committee has pointed out that the College Board Writing Sample comes to Rice as copies of the students' hand written themes. To read them all would be like reading 800 hour exams.)

GENERALLY SPEAKING, the members of the committee gain in experience the longer they are on the Committee. Here the Committee as a whole is somewhat at a disadvantage since, with the exception of Mr. Giles, Committee members serve for three years. However, a certain amount of the experience of the entire Committee is carried over from year to year by Mr. Giles.

No one is sure exactly what qualities Rice demands from its students in return for success academically.

FOR EXAMPLE, the question on whether the applicant is a grade seeker or a dedicated student was mentioned above. Which of the two should the ideal Rice student be? Probably he

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the applicants. RICE IS NOW using a period of self-criticism and, hopefully, self-improvement. Admissions is one aspect of the overall situation. This article has tried to present the prob-

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needs to be both. The purpose of such problems such as these is to have a committee on admissions select from a committee the variety of views in the admissions office to the faculty. The faculty mem-

About the problems such as these that there is a committee on admissions and that the Admissions Committee makes the final decisions for every candidate. Each member votes for the appi-

One of the biggest problems with the high school transcript and extra-cur-

RELIABILITY OF College Board is debatable. No donation to College Boards are a fairly good general guide to an applicant's ability, but are by no means perfect. These tests are available for almost every grade level. Per-Brett has saved us all times, but there is no way that an individual article.

Finally, all of the member of the Admissions Committee can do in the final analysis is to choose the applicants who in his best judgment are the best qualified to study at Rice. This is essentially a personal judgment and it is not this article's purpose to criticize the personal opinions of the Committee members. The purpose of this Committee is to obtain an accurate picture of the applicant, and to decide what type of person, will be the best worker and at the same time (it IS hoped) will benefit the most from the Rice education.

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In any event, these are the stu-

There are those whose personal non-academic plans require that they leave, such as financial reasons and the appi-

The point is that every person who leaves but not to the high school transcript or by the Admissions Committee is admitted to the University. These people who fall out through no fault of their own, and they don't receive the attention that they require, but that is another question.

There is a number of ways that the student who is applying to Rice that the type of education they are receiving here. They may be lacking in Rice in mathematics and science, instead of a J.P., for the amount of work they do in their course. It is obvious that the one who takes his intellectual education.

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One thing that might be done is to improve the selection of freshmen. The Committee to find out from each student who drops out his reasons for doing so. It is to be hoped that the Committee pick a better "survival" type.

The purpose of the article is to present the facts as they are and not to argue about them. The article, as it was presented, is not an argument but a statement of facts. The student, who will be the best worker and at the same time (it is hoped) will benefit the most from the Rice education.

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