Constructive Criticism Can Produce Results

By BOB CLARKE

An unfortunate attitude has become apparent during the recent discussion over the future direction of the University. Much disapproval has been expressed against the present system, but there has been a dearth of positive suggestions or proposals for bringing about change.

This situation is illustrated most vividly by the answer given to a student leader at the Forum Committee presentation last week. After being asked what students could do to help the University's difficulties, one of the panelists responded by saying, essentially, "Nothing." Not only does this reflect the lack of constructive attitude to which I refer, but it shows a complete disregard of the effect student proposals have had in previous years, such as the freshman curriculum change and the orientation-week program. If projects of this magnitude have been accomplished so recently, others like them can be at least as effective now.

APPELLANTLY THE feeling exists that those in charge of running the University—the President, his staff, and the Board of Governors—are indifferent to the feelings of the students and faculty. My personal experience in talking with them during the past month has been that they are not only concerned but are also enthusiastically receptive toward suggestions.

This is certainly not to say that all is well. There are many valid disagreements over the philosophy of the University and its ultimate goals. Exactly where is the development of the humanities program placed in relation to that of the sciences? How important is the establishment of a strong graduate school to the progress of the undergraduate level? Should its development come before the undergraduate level is more solidly grounded? How would a tuition charge affect these alternatives?

IN THEIR relation to this controversy students and faculty must realize that constructive criticism is at least as necessary as destructive criticism. This positive attitude is perhaps more difficult, for it will necessitate attempting to understand the underlying problems which make policy decisions not clear cut. It will also require patience because the desired reforms cannot take place overnight.

Until legitimate attempts to participate in University policy decisions have been frustrated, I feel that solely destructive criticism is not justified. I cannot cite a single instance in the last two years in which a reasonably thought-out student idea has been refused by the Administration.

The machinery is available through the College governments, the Senate, and the Academic Planning Committee to receive and to effect responsible ideas. If there is the genuine concern that I hope there is for the growth and development of the University, both students and faculty will take advantage of these opportunities to achieve satisfying results.