Why Not Honors?

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Rice University's academic curriculum is totally lacking the sophistication and imagination that outsiders are led to believe it has. Top students enter the University with this misconception and are led down a very narrow and restricting road of academics.

This university fails in its responsibilities to produce a curriculum or grading system equal to the quality of students, faculty, and reputation.

Where other comparable schools have been offering honors programs for decades, Rice has just recently disbanded its only semblances of such a program. The Ford program is gone now and there is nothing yet to replace it, although certain members of the History Department are attempting to institute an honors program in their department.

'Grade Mongering'

Nothing in the new Rice Bulletin offers the mature student a course of studies outside the traditional confines of high school scholarship and free of the "grade-mongering" that is a reality on this campus.

Though such ideas were originally espoused in a very ambitious, though somewhat impractical, Woodward Plan, the University has all but shelved the plan and has yet to implement even a minuscule part of the program.

Theses Offered

The only hint of freedom is various senior theses offered. But why should a senior spend months of laborious research and penmanship on a senior year's grade while at Harvard or Princeton his counterpart may graduate with honors on completion of his thesis and comprehensives.

Why should there be a wide disparity between the grades received in some notable Eastern schools and those at Rice, where the teachers and students are commonly thought to be comparable to those in the East?

No Credit

The upper-level courses at Eastern school take for granted the student's ability and intent upon education and the grades rarely range below a 3 plus. The student here is serious enough to make an honor code work but is not given credit for his academic sincerity or purpose.

And naturally, the system of grading here is often advantageous to the poor student and offers little incentive to the conscientious student. The student who cares little about his courses is able to do a minimum of work to gain a passing grade and remain in school.

On the other hand, the serious student must sacrifice background research and his individual outside interests, which may be as important to his intellectual development as the course itself.

It would seem that Rice is capable of offering some imagination in its curriculum — something outside the standard, compartmentalized present situation. An honors program would be a major step in this direction.