Dowden Named To Head English Department Discusses General Objectives In Interview

By RICHARD DARILEK

“Small, but working,” is Dr. Wilfred S. Dowden’s frank, overall appraisal of his latest charge.

With his term beginning in July of this year, Dr. Dowden has been appointed chairman of the Rice University Department of English and successor of the retiring head, Dr. Charles Carroll Camden. Following the recent announcement of this new appointment, the Thresher contacted the new chairman for a few comments.

IN REPLY to questions concerning the English Department’s past and present accomplishments, Dr. Dowden was highly complimentary and quick to cite such examples of progress as the national recognition awarded to the department’s quarterly journal, “Studies in English Literature,” the present series of English lectures, and the recent achievements of individual faculty members. Going further, however, he undertook to outline definite goals for the near and distant future.

“Our general, long-range objective,” continued Dr. Dowden, “is recruitment of faculty personnel in areas not yet fully covered. We will try to appoint new teachers in both the junior and senior ranks.”

DENYING ANY personal knowledge of the resignation of faculty members from the English Department, a supposition rumored in the light of the recent student-faculty discussion of the “Rice Myth,” he added that “one thing students fail to understand is that there is a movement going on constantly, particularly of professors on the junior level, who are younger, more mobile.”

Moving back to more specific details and aspirations in the English Department itself, Dr. Dowden stated that next year, in addition to pursuing the recruitment policy, he hopes to cut the size of the Freshmen English classes (they would have been smaller this year, he said, but for the unforeseen admission of some 50 more freshmen than anticipated), to “offer a greater variety of courses on the Junior, Senior, and Graduate levels,” and to continue the present program of building a well-stocked library in English.

A NON-RESIDENT associate of Baker College, Dr. Dowden took his B.A. in English in 1939 and his M.A. in German in 1940 both from Vanderbilt. He received his Ph.D. in English from the University of North Carolina in 1949. Coming directly to Rice, he has since been a University staff member.

Specializing in the English Romantic period, with a particular interest in Byron, Dr. Dowden has co-edited “Heritage of Freedom,” a series of essays on freedom, and has written articles on Byron and Joseph Conrad. His edition of the letters of the Irish poet Thomas Moore will soon be published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

BOOK-OF-SEMESTER—Tom Schunior, a Will Rice sophomore, and John Franks, a Baker sophomore, discuss Barbara Ward’s book with Frank Hole, Assistant Professor of Anthropology over lunch at Jones.