



THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

Report of the

COMMITTEE ON THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Report of Visiting Committee for the  
Yale Graduate School

The theme of this report is the status of graduate-undergraduate relations at Yale University, and the bases of the report are the written materials submitted to the Committee on the teaching of graduates and undergraduates by Yale's respective departments--materials dated April 1979 and reflecting the Yale situation as of the academic year 1978/79--and a visit to the Yale campus by the chairman and Ms. Elizabeth Janeway of the committee on October 11, 1979. The committee would like, therefore, to thank graduate deans Wendell Garner and Keith Thomson for their cooperation and the Council's secretary, Lawrence Noble, for his help in arranging the visit and producing this report.

The tension between graduate and undergraduate studies has long been a special problem at Yale because, on the one hand, overweening attention has been paid to the denizens of Yale College and, on the other hand, Yale has always proudly deemed itself a full-fledged international university with a full complement of graduate work and an almost full complement of professional schools as well. The balance which Yale has achieved between these commitments has recently been threatened by the economic crisis of graduate studies and, because graduate students have palpably sensed discrimination in their disfavor, the committee has felt obligated to investigate this aspect of graduate studies at Yale. The following is the result of this investigation.

There are two aspects of possible discrimination against graduate students in favor of undergraduates--academic and social--and of the two the discriminatory situation is much clearer in the latter than in the former facet. The faculty to whom we spoke, including humanistic representatives of the history department, are firm in their denial of educational discrimination on the part of the faculty, and graduate students are not vocal in their complaints about this aspect of their lives at Yale either. The departments insist that no protests on this score have ever been registered with them, and interviews by members of the committee with graduate students have elicited no definite picture on this score. The figures compiled for the committee by the departments confirm this picture of educational non-discrimination because of the plethora of courses open to both graduate and undergraduate students and because of the continuing large numbers of graduate students in all branches of the university and especially in the natural and social sciences. The figures reinforce the picture the committee has received from faculty of graduate students in the natural and social sciences working closely with mentors of their own choosing in a kind of apprentice relationship. One discerning member of the faculty, abetted by an equally discerning graduate student, did point out a subtle form of discrimination in this relationship, insofar as senior faculty relaxed with graduate students and put their teaching energy into communication with undergraduates,

but this note was submerged in the general testimony about non-discriminatory education as between graduate and undergraduate students at Yale.

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Conflicts and problems in this area appear to center in questions of "the quality of life." On the whole, doctoral candidates at Yale seem to be satisfied with the academic side. As for the faculty, there is no formal break between a high-ranking, graduate-teaching, research-doing arm and a less respected group charged only with undergraduate instruction. Where this is not the case, the reason seems to be the demands of a particular discipline. In physics and in languages, for example, it is evident that students must master elementary skills and a body of knowledge before they can go on to critical work. In these areas, one assumes that junior faculty will be tapped to teach elementary courses; but that seems to be a matter of convenience and tradition rather than policy. In some of the most endangered departments, the worries of the junior faculty appear to center on the prospect of increased teaching by senior faculty assisted by TAs, with an accompanying drop in junior positions open, and of opportunities to gain tenure.

The quality of life, however, is "the presenting problem," as the psychoanalysts say. Here one feels a good deal of sympathy with a graduate student arriving at Yale from another campus, and in a fair number of cases from small and sociable colleges, to find that social life is centered in residential units from which he or she is excluded. The aim of the

undergraduate colleges is to prevent exactly the situation that the graduate students are condemned to. They exist to offset the anonymity of university education and to provide the "intermediate associations" that Durkheim held to be necessary for decent existence. They are the base for student activities--intramural sports, cultural events, and now educational opportunities via college seminars. Little on-campus graduate housing exists with only HGS and Helen Hadley Hall offering residence; and at the latter, security appears to be a problem. In any case, neither functions as a base for social life and activity in the way that the colleges do. Most graduate students must house themselves off campus. No doubt many prefer this; but many may not. Even some of those who would choose to live in adult privacy might welcome a structured system for meeting with their fellows that was recognized by the university, so that they would have access to sports, to amateur participation in music or dramatics, and for self-directed discussion.

Such needs are increased by the fact that New Haven, while an urban center, does not offer easy access to major cultural events in the way that Boston, New York and Chicago do. Graduate students at Harvard, Columbia, and Chicago can avail themselves of frequent opportunities to enjoy the arts, to discover groups in the city with which they could participate themselves, and generally to mingle with others in these large urban settings. New Haven is too big to be a college town, too small to supply much in the way of cultural stimulus. This has a negative influence on the tone

of existence there.

Under present circumstances, when there will be increased competition among the top-ranked graduate schools for the few authentic students who want to go into graduate work, it is particularly important for Yale to use its comparative advantage and integrate graduate students into the activities of a functioning university. Of the distinction which faculty and graduate students alike make, between educational opportunity and life-style, the first seems to be common to all first rate universities while the second varies according to the distinctive genius of each. Although Yale should not violate the sensibilities of those who believe the graduate training is different in kind from undergraduate--and this belief seems to include the undergraduate students themselves as well as the head of the Council of Masters, and the Provost--it should encourage the integration of graduate students in the life of the University, either through existing colleges, as in the case of Calhoun, or through the organization of those graduate students who desire such a life-style into a collegiate-like mode.

The Center for graduate and professional students that we saw was pleasant enough; but it is not adequate for gatherings of any size. No doubt it is proper to start such an enterprise modestly. But if GS activities are to be encouraged, more space will be required. The quickest and simplest action the University might take to improve the social status of GSs (graduate students) would be to fund the existing Center more substantially, as the students we talked with suggested. A well attended and

active GS center would not only make life more pleasant for them, it would allow them to offer reciprocal arrangements to the undergraduate colleges. It would establish their presence on campus as a constituent body with membership in the University; and this seems to be lacking today.

In most of our talks, in fact, The Graduate Student Problem (TGSP) was seen entirely in terms of undergraduate life and experience. It is not that the Administration is unsympathetic, but rather that there seems little ability to imagine a solution other than affiliation with the existing colleges. Those who are most aware of TGSP favor affiliation. Those who are more committed to the undergraduate traditional image of Yale tend to see GSs as intruders who increase overcrowding, raise costs, and preempt places on intramural teams. And it is perfectly evident that affiliation is no real solution, not if you have two thousand or so GSs; even if only a third would take advantage of these opportunities. In fact, no one really knows how many would avail themselves of a chance to affiliate. Such investigation as has been made was rather casual; one of the GSs with whom we talked had never heard of the program at Calhoun, and was eager to investigate it. In short, concern over overcrowding is valid even if only a third of the GS body should desire it--adding six or seven hundred people to the college population would be a major undertaking. It could be done, no doubt, but not without planning and firm resolve! Certainly affiliation with existing colleges offers no quick solution to TSGP.

The committee was impressed by the opposition of important representatives of the faculty and the administration, as well as the ambiguous stance of the graduate students themselves, on the possibility of integrating graduate students into the undergraduate life of the colleges. It is the committee's understanding that at present only four graduate students are officially assigned to each college and that meal privileges for all graduate students must at present come out of masters' funds. The committee is also impressed by the wholesale undergraduate rejection of graduate participation in collegiate athletic activities, a rejection which seems to go along with undergraduate indifference to the intellectual stimulation which a few graduate students seem ready to offer. Where such stimulation takes the form of collegiate courses, then it is acceptable. Informally, it is neither accepted nor, the committee feels, acceptable.

Another negative appraisal must follow consideration of quick creation of new colleges, whether these be mixed or purely graduate. There are difficulties about money in hand, about current building costs and financing, about the attitude of the city and the effect on the surrounding area if more of those attending Yale were to be housed on campus. All these points were made to us, and they indicate that increasing the number of colleges is a long term question at best.



As far as affiliation goes, it seems that it would be wise to encourage it to the extent that colleges would welcome it. The Calhoun experiment was warmly praised, but one couldn't mandate that unwilling colleges follow this lead; though one could advocate experiment in it and in possible variations. Since many college seminars are now given by graduate students, it seems sensible to suggest that a year's affiliation be granted (or offered) every GS giving a seminar. Or, Masters of colleges who like the idea might be moved to invite graduate students in their field to take part in some college occasions. Something short of full affiliation should this take place, could open channels for an informal mix of GSs and undergraduates.

It seems there are two questions to be resolved. Should the GSs be provided with some sort of structured center, so that they might form a more coherent group within the University? Or is their relative isolation from much of University life a symptom of an overall requirement, a solution which would encourage the various entities within the University to mix more easily with each other? Both policies would be helpful. It seems really important for the GSs to be provided with more support and more opportunities for coming together than they now have. So, let the University increase its funding of the GPSC and facilitate the initiation of student activities at this level.

It seems equally important for the Administration to do what it can to overcome divisions between the different levels and schools. There is so much talent at Yale that it seems a shame for it not to join in shared enterprises. If there were channels in which students could inaugurate these talents, it would be all to the good.

Looking ahead, Yale, like all universities, faces two possible futures. First, one in which the student body shrinks. Would the graduate school shrink faster than the undergraduate body? The Administration believes so; and it may be the case. If it is, affiliation of GSs with existing colleges would become more attractive. But unless their condition is felt to be more important than it is now, they will continue to be seen as marginal, and perhaps become more marginal. In that case, a center for their activities will be needed even more than it is now.

The alternative is a steady and even growing student body. This may seem unlikely, but an awful lot of unlikely things have happened in higher education over the last generation. A steady state would ratify present needs for an increase in residential housing now described as overcrowded; and options for GS residence should be included.

If the student body were actually to grow, more pressure on housing would accompany it, even though growth would almost certainly include "continuing education" students, many of whom would not want to live in residence colleges. They would, however, stand in greater need of centers

for activities and might well be candidates for some advantages of affiliation, such as meal privileges. Barnard, to make a comparison between Yale's graduate students and the "quality of life" catered by the administration for Barnard's commuters, tries to provide some available space in which commuters may stay when the need to be on campus is great.

In general, getting more financial support from the Administration for the GSPCS (as a needed first step) would surely lead to taking TGSP more seriously. If you have to pay for something, you think about it! No one at Yale wants the GSs to regard themselves as marginal creatures or second-class citizens; but in the present employment-situation, they, themselves may feel that silence is golden and that they had better suffer along without complaint. That would be bad for Yale. No one, working as hard as the GSs have to, can really afford to be unhappy or resentful. It saps energy needed for work. Depressed or angry students are not good students; or not as good as they could be. "Improving the quality of life" may sound like a frill, a selfish and frivolous demand from the "Me generation." Well, if that is so, why the residential colleges? Why concern for undergraduate experience and general satisfaction? One of the GSs we talked with remarked on the tendency of the Administration to shut down normal working facilities (close the library) when undergraduates were not on campus. Is a shut library part of the "quality of life" issue--or an obvious requirement for superior research? This is an obvious example, but living conditions in general partake of the same nature.

Recommendations:

The Committee to Visit the Graduate School therefore recommends:

1. That the University organize its graduate students into groups or clubs.
2. That the University establish graduate-undergraduate competitions on an all-Yale basis.
3. That the University initiate inter-University competition of an athletic or other corporate kind for graduate students on a voluntary basis.
4. That the University encourage but not dictate initiatives such as that of Calhoun College for the integration of graduate and undergraduate students on the basis of the undergraduate residential colleges.
5. That the University encourage and subsidize more than it now does the self-organization of graduate and professional students.

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