

# The profs discuss

## Students should participate



**PROFESSOR DICK WEAVER**

"Lectures fail to fulfill the fundamental purpose of learning. They . . . bring the student no closer to self-realization."



**PROFESSOR TED KEMP**

"It is absolutely essential to get students deeply involved in the subject. They must be grabbed by it."

"Teaching is many things.

"It is research conducted with students (in contrast to hired technicians). Teaching is the excitement that can be generated in a student's mind by the mere presence on the same campus with faculty minds known to be creative and to be esteemed by the profession. Teaching is the random suggestion, however inarticulate, conveyed perhaps osmotically, that a certain problem is important to investigate. Teaching is casual conversation. Teaching is lecturing to large audiences. Teaching, above all, is something that is important to say. Teaching is many things. And the only possible prescription for it at university or college level is to see that somehow, in some way, active junior minds are in some kind of contact with active senior minds." (Robert A. Nisbet in "Conflicting Academic Loyalties")

The university professor has classically been thought of as fulfilling three basic functions: the research function, exploring the frontiers of human knowledge; the informational function, transmitting formalized knowledge concerning the nature of the world and man; and the character-developing function, involving the inculcation of values and the development of character.

In the modern times the third function has greatly declined and the first two have risen in importance and become separated.

Since there is evidence that a positive correlation exists between excellence (both institutional and individual) and faculty interest in students, we felt that the opinions of professors on what they feel a university should be and what their role is in such a university would be of significant interest to students.

The professors interviewed were chosen from the students' union course guide honor roll: Professor L. Yeudall and Dr. W. A. Blanchard of the department of psychology, Dr. Manus Sasonkin of the department of music, Prof. Ted Kemp of philosophy, Prof. W. E. Harris of chemistry, Prof. R. R. Hett of history and Prof. Dick Weaver of English.

In discussing what a university is or should be, about the only common conclusion was there can be no clear-cut, all-encompassing answer to such a question.

Dr. Blanchard felt the basic purpose of the university to be the "getting and dissemination of two classes of knowledge." First would be information in the form of facts aimed at students and second,

the acquisition of meaning through the organization of information.

Dr. Sasonkin said, "The university should act to enlarge the thinking mechanism of the individual."

Professor Yeudall agreed, saying this would make the student aware that life is complex and there are no simple answers.

"Society has turned the university around to where it is now thought of as an end, when in fact it should be considered as the beginning of enlightenment," he said. The professor's role is determined by the personal goals of the individual profes-

---

### Feature by Hu Arnold and Peter Roberts

---

sor and by the subject being taught. The broader his personal experience, the more the professor has to offer his students and the greater the personal impact behind the facts.

Dr. Sasonkin said a teacher is someone with something to communicate, and he should use teaching as a "distillation and communication of his other work in the field. The teacher must cut the umbilical cord of the student to make him self-supporting and independent." He must equip students to survive in the world and attempt to raise the student's equipment to the maximum.

All the professors interviewed agreed that research and teaching complement one another, since the disseminating and getting of knowledge cannot be separated.

Professor Yeudall said research is one basis of knowledge and thus helps the professor decide what he will teach and impart.

If a professor's research is not relevant to his teaching or has no influence upon what he teaches or the way he teaches it, then the research can only be considered a hobby, said Dr. Sasonkin.

All the professors interviewed felt their most important task as teachers was to present some sort of philosophy of knowledge and ways of using it.

The professor must create conditions for the student to develop his own meaning, said Professor Yeudall. "He must challenge the student's belief systems and shake down biases and prejudices. First year students enter the uni-

versity with concrete belief systems and the university introduces them to more abstract systems."

Dr. Blanchard felt the university does a good job in research and in dissemination of information, but greatly falls down in providing the support and information for students to engage in the attempt to acquire meaning.

Much of this failure is due to the present lecture system, which allows the professor the opportunity to suggest organizations but which does not allow the student to acquire meaning, said Dr. Sasonkin. "Education becomes meaningful in discussion; information is only fuel in the educative process and thus it is in the seminar that education truly exists."

"The teacher should act as a catalyst to improve on and focus the relationship between student and material, and to help the student discover how he can involve himself in the material to sharpen his reasoning and improve his perceptions," said Dr. Sasonkin. The professor acts as a guide, relating the course to real life experiences and letting the students examine themselves and what they want to know.

How far should you, as students, be held responsible for your own education?

To some questions like this there was agreement. Prof. Ted Kemp, Prof. W. E. Harris, Prof. R. R. Hett and Prof. Dick Weaver believed it was vital to have student participation in drawing up the curriculum, but, with the exception of Kemp, they made the reservation that the details of content in each course be the final decision of the professors themselves.

None of them felt they had been restricted at all by the university administration in their own methods of teaching.

Professor Kemp feels that the major responsibility for learning lies with the student himself. The professor, he said, should not be a 'fount of information' but should present relevant issues for discussion.

Prof. Kemp does not lecture as such. He feels that lectures serve no purpose if they merely transfer information. The best technique, he says, is the dialogue situation, where the student is confronted with ideas in open discussion groups.

"It is absolutely essential to good pedagogical practice to get students deeply involved in the subject. They must be grabbed by it," stated Kemp. If a professor cannot instill this involvement in his students then, said Kemp, "he must go." The size of the lec-