

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY OAKLAND

NEWSLETTER

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Michigan State University Oakland is now nearing the end of its first year as the nation's newest university and one that has attracted widespread attention. The following notes are a capsule recapitulation of the year so far; and a peek at the second year.

ENROLLMENT: MSUO opened last Fall with 570 students. It started the second quarter with 535 students and the Spring quarter with 475. Thus, with as rigorous a program as there is in the country, MSUO's attrition was less than the average for U.S. colleges and universities of 27.3%. Most of these students were in the top half of their graduating classes, and 55% of them in the top quarter, and they represent a typical cross section of average-good and superior college-going students.

GRADES: The first semester 17% of the 1960 grades given were F's. This is about average for state universities. In three courses, Chemistry, Math and Economics, the percentage was much higher. There were several reasons for this. One was that freshmen had a this-time-only option of taking Math or Science instead of a language. The result was that 32% of the freshman class was taking Calculus, which is not normally a freshman course, and 28% a most rigorous Chemistry course. In Economics freshmen with inadequate backgrounds were getting in one term what they get at many other institutions in two terms as sophomores. Hereafter they will have the background provided by a year's sequence on the Development of Western Institutions.

Grades (Contd.): In the second quarter, the percentage of F's dropped to 13%, the general grade level moved upward and the number of students making all A's and B's increased from 50 to 70. Twenty-eight students were dropped because they had less than 1.0 (D) averages.

College, always a major adjustment for teenagers, was much more acutely so for MSUO's charter class, for they were on the maiden voyage of a new institution with a young and vigorous faculty. Even more important, we began to realize midway of the first quarter, these freshmen had no sophomores as living, walking demonstrations that someone no smarter than they could absorb this rigorous program and survive. Dean Roy Alexander mustered the University's forces to overcome an obvious sag in morale. He insisted that students see their faculty advisers, he arranged camouflaged inspirational meetings in which the freshmen were made to feel that rather than being afflicted they were, as scholars, the elite and the elect of society. He also instituted a study skills program which offered instruction and tips on reading for comprehension and speed, and on studying effectively. He also started a series of faculty-student coffee hours, which helped overcome natural freshman timidity.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES: Much approving attention has been given in newspapers and magazines across the country to the fact that MSUO does not have what Chancellor Varner has called the "educational tailfins and chrome" of most colleges. It does not have a football team, fraternities or sororities, R.O.T.C., nor physical education courses. But it does have a healthy and fast-growing program of activities for the benefit of all students. Hollie Lepley and Jean Young, the physical education directors, have been developing a many-faceted intramural program that has involved formation of clubs for skiing, weight-lifting, fencing, bowling, golf, archery, and several others. But until an intramural building and showers are provided, which we hope will be soon, one of our problems will be providing recreation without perspiration.

A Student Government Exploratory Committee, elected by the students, has been visiting other college campuses and studying divers forms of student government in preparation for recommending one here. A student governing board for the Student Center has staged frequent Saturday night dances.

Student Activities (Contd.): A yearbook is being published. A student newspaper was published until near the end of the second quarter, when the call of studying more than decimated its small staff. The newspaper will be started again in September.

A choral group under the direction of Mrs. Isabel Himelhoch has given several performances during the year. There is a Chess Club, A French Club, Young Republicans and Young Democrats Clubs, and various other organizations.

STUDENT AID: Loans have been made to 45 students, with \$20,000 provided under the National Defense Education Act, and 60 students have received scholarship aid totaling nearly \$19,000. Of these, 45 received tuition scholarships of \$255 each, and 15 got awards of \$500 each, which will pay all the normal expenses of a commuter student. Another 120 students obtained part-time jobs through the Dean of Students. Chancellor Varner hopes to have 130 scholarships for next year. A scholarship committee of MSUO under the leadership of Mrs. Ralph T. Norvell has the goal of raising \$40,500 and has already obtained over \$30,000. Not only will renewals be needed for students who have scholarships this year, but new ones will be needed for incoming freshmen. In addition, Mr. Varner has offered high school principals in Oakland, Macomb and Lapeer Counties a guarantee that no student in the top quarter of his class shall be denied a chance to go to college for lack of money.

STUDENT ATTITUDES: Recently Dr. Robert Hopkins, Director of Counseling and Testing, had all the students in the Western Institutions course answer anonymously four questions. These were: What things about college were most unexpected for you? What things were most different from your expectations? What would you prescribe for your high school to prepare students for college? What advice would you give students now in high school? The answers say that college students like college tough, and that high school should have been more challenging. The consensus is that red-blooded youngsters who are only average, as well as the superior students, are ready to sweat and strain for intellectual accomplishment, just as they are to achieve physical prowess.

As might be expected, they said that the enormous amount of work, the fast pace and over-all difficulty of it, were the most unexpected things.

Student Attitudes (Contd.): Almost as many commented on the responsibility given them for their own learning and on the fact that they were expected to express critical, independent opinions rather than regurgitate what the teacher had told them. Faculty-student friendliness was also a great and welcome surprise.

But they were also surprised to find the interest and stimulation they discovered in the arduous work of college. They said through their prescriptions that high school should be like this. They said high school students must be compelled to acquire good study habits and to read with comprehension. They prescribed more demanding and difficult assignments and more reading and research to increase independent thinking and analysis also. They urged stronger, tougher English courses, with a theme a week, and they said over and over again that high school teachers should grade more severely.

Evidence of a developing new spirit has been mounting through the year. Just before the end of the first quarter, over a hundred students gave up their Saturday night dates to attend a dinner and review session in preparation for the first quarter's final exam. Furthermore, they had to pay \$3.50 for the privilege. At the end of the second quarter another one, also the students' idea, and advertised only by the grapevine, drew 220. A few weeks later there was a two-hour lecture and discussion on Gen. Charles De Gaulle as a case study in what makes a great man, on Wednesday afternoon from 2 to 4, when few students have to be on campus, yet the attendance was 150.

Each Tuesday night a group of a dozen or so students have been meeting at someone's house to discuss one of a series of important books bearing on their college work. Other students have been asking how they can get in this group. MSUO students, in short, are giving some indication that they find learning interesting. They are also taking an obvious pride in the fact that MSUO is tough.

COURSES FOR NEXT YEAR: Another questionnaire given students on course preferences indicates that Teacher Education will draw the largest number of students--156. Seventy-five chose the Liberal Arts curriculum; 53, Engineering-Science; and 34, Business Administration. Of the teachers, 109 plan to teach in secondary schools.

Courses for next year (Contd.): The University is now in the last phases of shaping the curriculum for next year and succeeding years. The curriculum is largely as it was recommended by the MSUO Foundation. Every student will take half his work in Liberal Arts. One additional required sequence has been added, however, in the form of a year's study of the fine arts -- music, art, and drama. The required year's study of foreign cultures will begin next Fall with an Asian studies sequence.

A program for Teacher Education candidates is now being worked out in committee. Faculty members to teach the new courses have largely been hired. Because MSUO's budget was cut from \$1,065,000 to \$879,720 -- 20 new faculty members will be added for the 1960-61 school year instead of 35.

LIBRARY: The Kresge Foundation has voted to give MSUO \$500,000 to start construction on the \$1,500,000 Kresge Library. The Foundation also said they intended to consider giving MSUO similar grants in 1961 and 1962. Construction on the Library is expected to start September 1 and the completion date has been set for September 15, 1961. It is our purpose to try to make of the Library something significantly different; namely, an active study center in which the resources of the University, i.e., such things as lectures, discussion groups, reading assignments, etc., would be filmed and taped and indexed so they would be available at any time to any student.

OTHER BUILDINGS: Work is due to start this summer on the \$2,000,000 Science and Engineering Building authorized by the legislature. It will be located due south of the classroom building. This building and the Library are the breakthroughs that insure MSUO's continued growth.

The Science and Engineering Building will be a new departure in educational efficiency and economy. It will cost only one-third as much per square foot as industry spends for a like structure, or \$18 compared with \$50. By scheduling three sections a day and by doubling and tripling the size of laboratory classes, Professors William Hammerle and Paul Tombouljian plan to make it provide four times as many educational hours per week per dollar invested as the usual college science building. Further, new developments in semi-micro-sized equipment will halve the costs of equipment and chemicals, saving about \$10 per student per year.

DORMITORIES: It is hoped that dormitories can be started this summer. Gifts are being sought to underwrite construction of one of four units, each housing 48 students, with an apartment for a resident adviser for each two units. The gift of one unit would enable all four to be self-liquidating.

THE WORD: MSUO has been the subject of more national, and state, attention than any other college or university anywhere. People are eager to hear of an idea to develop men and women rather than practitioners. It has been the subject of stories and editorials in national magazines, the topic of Sunday feature stories in newspapers across the country; and the Voice of America is shortwaving a program about MSUO in four languages across both sides of the Iron Curtain.

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