

# THE FREE UNIVERSITIES

## RALPH KEYES

*Mr. Keyes is studying at the London School of Economics and writes on education topics.*

"An Investigation into Sex" is now offered at Dartmouth. "Analogues to the LSD Experience" can be studied at Penn. "Guerrilla Warfare" is being examined by DePauw students. Stanford undergraduates are studying "American Youth in Revolt," and "The Origins and Meaning of Black Power" is a course at Brooklyn College.

Has higher education finally caught up with the times? The colleges and universities themselves have not, but some of their members are trying to fill the gap with side shows. The above courses and hundreds like them are currently offered at student-organized "free universities" and "experimental colleges" on campuses across the country.

Bob Reich is one of the organizers. A short, ivy-leaguish senior, he is concerned about the quality and content of education at Dartmouth. Ten years ago Reich would have done little more than grumble discreetly about large lecture courses or grade-motivated learning. Five years ago he might have mustered up a minor demonstration. But in the winter of 1966, Reich, a top history student and former class president, simply gathered some colleagues around him and seceded.

"I had heard about student-organized experimental colleges at San Francisco State and Princeton," he recalls, "so I talked to a couple of guys, put a notice in the paper and held a meeting." Fifty people attended and out of it emerged the Dartmouth Experimental College (DEC). Fraternities, social clubs and dormitories agreed to organize courses.

The result was first presented to the community in the form of an elegantly printed catalogue. "When you're trying to explain a sex course to some townspeople, it sure helps to have a fancy catalogue," explains one DEC organizer. Listed were seventeen courses on such topics as "Man Faces Death," "The Development of Conservative Thought" and "Contemporary Marriage." Each course had an undergraduate coordinator who was responsible for writing a syllabus, constructing a reading

list, and inviting speakers. "The emphasis of these courses will be on the desires and interests of the participants, rather than on the structures and requirements of an institution," reads the catalogue. "Innovation will be the rule; free give and take will be the method; a provocative educational experience will be the goal."

A massive publicity campaign then began. DEC organizers made radio and TV appearances, newspaper articles described the venture, and mailings were sent out—not only to Dartmouth students but to faculty, townspeople and girls at nearby Colby Junior College. Doubling the most optimistic prediction, 1,057 people applied for the first quarter's offerings. These included 585 Dartmouth students (about one-fifth of the student body); 230 townspeople; seventy faculty members; and 173 Colby girls. For a while, the Dartmouth Experimental College was the fourth largest college in New Hampshire. The dean of Dartmouth applied for a course, as did his two secretaries. (He missed the first class, but wrote the student coordinator asking for a "Dean's Excuse.") Since the seminars were to be kept small, only half the applicants could be accepted. Thirty-eight of seventy faculty members applying were admitted, and the Director of Admissions just missed being turned away.

"Great!" wrote in one student, "this has made Dartmouth meaningful." "It's wonderful to pursue a subject out of sheer interest and sans pressures of any kind," commented another. An older lady from town bubbled: "For so many years I've tried to get students into my home to talk. . . . This is the first time anything like this has happened and I'm so thrilled. . . . I'd do anything to keep it going." Even the Dean of Faculty endorsed the venture, saying soberly: "A healthy institution will work very hard to promote this kind of insurgence."

Dartmouth's experience is not unique. Banding together with faculty and townspeople, young academic secessionists have formed more than forty free universities and experimental colleges in the past two years.

Growing out of the civil rights "Freedom Schools" and Vietnam "Teach-ins," free universities began cropping up during 1965 in New York, Berkeley, Chicago, Detroit and Los Angeles. These early efforts were generally

more militant than free and too often suffered from what Harvey Wheeler, a staff member of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, called "a suffocating Marxist commitment." New Left groups, particularly Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), quickly picked up the idea and began to organize free universities. Michigan, Texas, Colorado, Ohio State, Florida, Wisconsin and Minnesota became nervous hosts to "counter-university" squatters.

But an interesting evolution soon began to occur in these academic fifth columns. If free university founders were often left-wing ideologues, many of the teachers and most of the students wanted simply to teach and learn in a free atmosphere. The anti-establishmentarians were soon faced with the choice of trying to whip their creations into line, allowing them to go their own way, or simply letting them die.

The Free University of Pennsylvania (FUP), an early venture, founded in the winter of 1966 by the local SDS chapter, ran into this problem: "When we first started discussing having a free university we expected 100 to 150 to get involved at most," recalls Bob Brand, a stocky, garrulous SDS senior in economics. "We had thirty to forty courses planned and were really worried about how to explain a poor sign-up to the teachers of the courses." "But," marvels a girl who was involved in registration, "all these 'straight' people came out of the woodwork to get involved, people you never would have expected to sign up for something like this." In the end, about 750 people enrolled, and ten new seminars had to be organized on the spot to handle the overflow. It soon became obvious that the Free University of Pennsylvania had gone beyond its SDS roots, and the parent weaned its child because, as an SDS spokesman admitted, "it had outgrown us."

One of the most successful efforts of its kind, FUP has enrolled more than 700 students for forty to fifty courses in each of its three semesters, many participants coming from the surrounding community. Free University officials estimate that students or teachers from twenty-eight Philadelphia institutions other than Penn are involved.

Enthusiasm for Penn's Free University is generally high. Sophomore Rich Feigenberg took an FUP course because "in the regular university there are too many requirements, few electives allowed, and even these you have to fit into your schedule." Freshman Mary Knutch attended the FUP seminar on Contemporary Issues because "after two semesters at Penn I found that I had forgotten how to talk." Tom Knox, a junior, found that in the "New Left Ideologies" class, "you get a good discussion inasmuch as nobody feels like the professor is trying to make a point."

Penn's administration is less sanguine about this pearl in its shell. A point of friction has been the question of whether outsiders should be allowed to use the university facilities "for free." Though the students have won grudging consent on this issue, the dean's office points out that the Free University has yet to supply the reports and statistics that were promised in return. "There doesn't

seem to be much planning," concludes Dean of Women Alice Emerson. Her complaint is well grounded. In its quest for freedom the Free University of Pennsylvania has created a bureaucratic structure so ill defined that work tends to fall upon whoever will do it—usually the hard-working coordinator Steve Kuromiya, a senior in architecture.

This type of problem caused three FUP Coordinating Committee members to write a public letter last year contending: "The Free University is in trouble. . . . The majority of courses are ill attended, the creative thought has been at a minimum in many courses, the minimal office work required has not been done, and that which has been done by a few people." The letter caused a flurry of controversy. A large public meeting was held to discuss the issue and many volunteers came forward.

But from beneath this crisis a more interesting and subtle kind of disagreement came to light. The worriers came from the original SDS crew who had started the Free University. Their conception of what it should be was expressed by Bob Brand who says: "The way I wanted it to go was to have people asking the basic questions about their disciplines." This, he admits, is "basically a very conservative academic position." But Brand's constituency is small. The new hero of today's Free University at Penn is Ira Einhorn, a thirtyish, long-haired, bearded, "Be-in" organizer. Einhorn, who wears a daffodil behind one ear, graduated from Penn ten years ago, and has been moving in beat and hip subcultures ever since. Last term he taught two courses in the Free University: "Analogues to the LSD Experience" and "The World of Marshall McLuhan."

"Kids are learning more wandering around cities and on TV than in the universities," says Einhorn in explaining his approach to education. "I like to move around and you need more mobile classrooms. My classroom is just an extension of myself. It's the same kind of thing that happened in the Be-in. After living in the insane asylum you've got to get sane yourself."

Einhorn rambles, darting wildly from subject to subject. He is obviously intelligent and well read. His McLuhan course syllabus ("subject to change as I grow into the course or it grows into me") recommends thirty-six books, from Nietzsche to Goodman, and Roethke to Ginsberg. His teaching tools ranged from candles and incense to rock 'n' roll and free-word association. Einhorn's courses are easily the most popular in the Free University. "LSD" had an enrollment of more than 100, and "McLuhan" actually *rose* in participation from sixty to seventy-five, more people attending the last class than the room would hold.

"Old New Leftists" like Bob Brand are basically concerned with the limitations of course *content* in existing institutions, and want to create a setting where people can study society in a rigorous way. Leftism and pedagogy are hardly inconsistent. The new breed of insurgent looks to a hipper, freer, "celebration" form of learning. To them method and content cannot be separated because freedom, opening up, living and loving are themselves the goals. Randomness can only help that process, as surely as a junior bureaucracy will hinder it. As the

hippies ascend, the "Be-in" and the free university become more and more indistinguishable.

Similar disputes have occurred at San Francisco State's Experimental College. Senior English major Cynthia Carlson brought some freshmen together there in the fall of 1965 to discuss and critically examine their education. By spring, twenty-one seminars had grown up, organized by students and loosely grouped under the heading of "The Experimental College" (EC). More than 350 students were involved as participants, as well as twenty-five student seminar organizers and thirty faculty members who donated time as advisers.

Although influenced by the free university movement, the students at State aimed at special goals from the start. They deliberately avoided getting stuck in a posture of self-conscious militancy, preferring instead to "build a model," a positive alternative that would parallel the existing college. "Creative tension" was to exist between the two, said Jim Nixon, 25-year-old graduate student in philosophy who coordinated the original effort. "If you can get the sense of what you want to build," he explained, "then you can go to the college, take what is useful in it and avoid hostilities."

State's venture quickly mushroomed. Seventy courses were set up in the fall of 1966 for some 1,200 registrants. The national news media began to take notice of this "quiet revolution" just across the bay from Berkeley. Nixon, a persuasive and extremely bright leader, ran for president of State's Associated Students on a pro-EC platform and won overwhelmingly. The future sparkled and the EC's fall catalogue declared:

The idea is that students ought to take responsibility for their own education. The assertion is that you can start learning anywhere, as long as you really care about the problem you tackle and how well you tackle it. The method is one which asks you to learn how you learn, so you can set the highest conceptual standards of accomplishment for yourself. The assumption is that you are capable of making an open-ended contract with yourself to do some learning, and capable of playing a major role in evaluating your own performance. The claim is that if people, students, faculty and administrators work with each other in these ways, the finest quality education will occur.

In its first year and a half, the Experimental College has had a tempestuous history. At best it has provided an open creative learning situation, spiced by a heavy dose of West Coast *avant-gardism*. A course in "Competition and Violence" had participants study conflict by learning and practicing judo, speaking to one another about their reactions while they fought. The "Involvement Theatre Workshop" was "an attempt to create a genre of theatre in which the audience is involved to the greatest extent possible—perplexed, threatened and ultimately seduced into intellectual, emotional and physical participation in the action." Last year, EC sponsored a thirty-six-hour, 6,000-person light show, rock and soul, "sensory awakening happening" called "Whatever It Is."

Problems soon confronted the EC. State's newspaper, *The Daily Gater*, sniped regularly at the "Other Col-

lege." Wrote city editor Phil Garlington: "The Other College, in truth, is quite harmless, for the most part a playschool for the S.F. State hippie element." Former chairman of the faculty, Dr. Richard Axen, commented that "Any professor who teaches in the Experimental College loses respectability within his department." When a *Newsweek* article lauding the Experimental College hit the stands, several faculty members reportedly called on the vice president for academic affairs to ask who was running the college—the president or Jim Nixon.

Harder to combat than external debunking has been perpetual strife within the "parallel college." EC's key debate centered around the question of planning versus spontaneity. As at Penn, the question of what *type* of learning is best receives constant attention. Former coordinator Cynthia Carlson Nixon, Jim's wife, has consistently pushed for greater structure and rigorous learning. She worries that students who cut their teeth on the Experimental College may reject "the beautiful, great thoughts of the ages," and confuse real learning with simple fun. Before resigning as coordinator, she reported hopefully: "Kids might have tried a course for a couple of semesters and found they were screwing up, not attaining what they wanted, and had to figure out how to do it. Now, they're having to make an investment of time and energy. They can't just bop in saying, 'teach me, and make it fun.'" Graduate student Floyd Turner, who has been studying the Experimental College, compared what he finds there to "the traditional problem that students faced when they got to Oxford. It often takes them a year to adjust to the shock of being responsible for their own learning."

But harder times now face EC. Their gadfly critic, Phil Garlington, was recently elected president of the associate students against an EC-backed slate. Internal dissension has left its toll in disunity. The original leadership has left the campus, and a hipper breed of student is in charge. Academic credit problems have created ill will, and after a year and a half the faculty is increasingly resistant to Experimental College demands and encroachment.

Staters who have been involved in the Experimental College for any length of time feel generally discouraged. But one wonders how they could possibly see the venture as in any way a failure. San Francisco State itself, in large part because of prodding from the Experimental College, now offers experimental courses which a faculty member can create for a trial semester, with only departmental approval. It has a much loosened general education program, with a student-faculty committee working to revise it still more. It is considering a Work-Study degree program, growing in part out of the Urban Communities and Change Area of the Experimental College. And when one considers the thousands of State students who were stimulated by direct or indirect contact with the EC to question the roots of their education, failure seems hardly the term.

It is risky to generalize about the scores of free universities and experimental colleges, since their diversity is at least as great as their similarity. Stanford's aggressively anti-establishment "Experiment" bears lit-

tle resemblance to Dartmouth's low-key Experimental College. "Valley Centre" students (from Smith, Mount Holyoke, the University of Massachusetts and Amherst) happily rented a house for their venture, but FUPers wouldn't hear of such a thing. ("Too many ties, less freedom," contends coordinator Kuromiya. "The way we do it all you need is a few leaflets.") On the other hand, while Penn students gladly use university facilities, DEC organizers refuse to jeopardize their autonomy, preferring to meet in clubrooms and fraternities. The EC at San Francisco State relies on student teachers, while Ohio State's Free University uses only professors. At Penn and San Francisco State new teaching methods are eagerly being sought, but Dartmouth organizers have been content to rely on a standard seminar format. Students at Stanford and State can seek degree credit for their extracurricular learning, but the FUP and DEC want no such entanglement.

Despite this diversity some common aspects can be found and evaluated. These include:

*Creating a new learning environment.* Particularly in the multiversities where huge lecture classes are the rule, there is no doubt that the free universities and experimental colleges have responded to massive frustration with the existing learning environment. "The Free University did seem to fill a need students feel for small group discussion of intellectual matters," concedes Penn Dean Emerson. "It was the only chance I got to talk," says a Penn freshman of her FUP class.

Of course this informal atmosphere is not without its price. Extensive reading for a free university course is rare and discussions of the "bull-session" variety are all too frequent. Dartmouth English Prof. Alan Gaylord, who took the DEC course on J. R. R. Tolkien, laments: "If learning involves more than just an exchange of opinion, includes real digging, then I think there's a real question about the value of our course. Superficial discussion has value up to a point, but there are so many decisions about what to do with one's time that this rapidly loses value."

*Focusing learning on more relevant, interesting and integrated subjects.* If nothing else, the subjects studied in student-run colleges are more contemporary and lively than those taught in normal institutions. They must be to attract and hold an audience.

One of the DEC courses last term was on the Cuban Revolution. Freshman Camilo Garzón, the son of a Colombian military officer, eagerly enrolled. Asked if he had learned anything in the short time the class had been meeting, he replied, "Oh, yes, I learned for example that Castro had changed his mind about Marxism during the revolution. I hadn't known that and got a better view of Castro." He found that the most exciting thing was the debate between two anti-Fidel Cuban refugees and the Castro supporters in the class.

One enterprising 18-year-old junior science student at Dartmouth wanted to organize a course on Immanuel Velikovsky, a scientific heretic who has constructed an elaborate historical hypothesis of cataclysmic world development. Realizing that his subject was esoteric, the student, Ron Silverman, posted signs around campus reading, "WHO IS IMMANUEL VELIKOVSKY?" These were

followed a few days later by posters asking "WHERE IS IMMANUEL VELIKOVSKY?" and later still "WHAT DOES IMMANUEL VELIKOVSKY SAY?" and "WHAT DOES IMMANUEL VELIKOVSKY DO?" "Who is Immanuel Velikovsky?" soon became a form of friendly greeting around Dartmouth, and when the first Experimental College catalogue appeared, sure enough, there was a course entitled, "The Works of Immanuel Velikovsky." Its description began, "In response to the current wave of interest in the theories of Dr. Immanuel Velikovsky. . . ."

About fifteen students and seven professors from different fields involved themselves in this course, the climax of which was a visit by Velikovsky himself. Word that he was coming spread as far as Ambassador College in Pasadena, where the dean sent money to tape the sessions and came across country himself for the two days. By most reports this was one of the most



diverse and intensive grillings Velikovsky had ever received (he was eager to come for that reason), and he defended himself so limply that the few students who had started out in any way "believers" ended up as skeptics. "But," reports Silverman, "in order to understand Velikovsky we had to study so many side issues—Egyptian history, Biblical studies, geology, physics, astronomy, etc.—that this in itself was of great value." The class shared his enthusiasm, and the professors were delighted at the opportunity to get together with colleagues in other fields. Recently, letters have come from the *Saturday Review* and from as far away as Holland, asking for transcripts of the taped class sessions.

Although the sparkle and relevance of student-organized courses can be impressive, one wonders about their lasting value. Is the diligent student teacher at Dartmouth's course on "Gambling in the United States" really serving a useful function? "People will gamble," he explains, "and I might as well make them better at it."

*Improved student-faculty relations.* At best these ventures can fulfill a City College student's dream that a professor will "sit down, take off his tie, you'll call him Harry and he'll call you Mickey and you'll discuss physics together." Some have come close.

At Pennsylvania they tell of a psychology professor who had a reputation as a sort of "bad guy"—a tough, sour teacher. He had generally taught huge lecture courses which he hated. Lots of cheating went on, and there was little opportunity for personal contact. When the Free University first started he wrote a letter to the *Daily Pennsylvanian* offering to teach a course on "Pride." "We thought it was a put-on," recalls an FUP organizer, "but we called him and found out he was serious." Twenty people signed up for the course and most finished it. The Free University later got a letter from the professor saying how much he loved teaching it, having been able to relate to his students on a good intellectual and personal level. "I really dug that, since I had heard for so long that he was a bastard," marvels the FUP functionary.

But too often the traditional inhibitions of student-faculty relationships are not so easily broken down. History of Science instructor, David Kubrin, who took the Dartmouth Velikovsky course, expressed disappointment that the DEC had not achieved a "community of scholars." "I'm still referred to as 'sir,'" he notes sardonically. A Penn student tells of attending an FUP seminar held at a friend's apartment. Even there, he reported, the professor sat apart from the students, who directed all discussion at him. "They just couldn't break down old barriers," laments the visitor, "so I went for the punch to break down my own barriers."

*Broadening the pool of teachers.* Student-run educational experiments commonly involve as teachers people hardly acceptable to existing institutions. The most successful course at DePauw's Free University, on guerrilla warfare, was taught by an Air Force major. He enrolled several girls, a few professors, and had to divide his class in two sections to accommodate the overflow. In another vein, the Pre-University at the University of Wisconsin (Milwaukee) brought in the past state Communist Party

chairman to teach Marxism, causing acute pain to some state legislators.

Lawyers, businessmen, housewives, writers, political activists—even a gardener (at SF State) and a Goldwater adviser (at Penn) have been considered qualified to teach free university-experimental college courses.

At San Francisco State the students hired social critic Paul Goodman to be "their professor" for a semester last year. The experience was less productive than it should have been because neither Goodman nor his students could figure out exactly what he was there to do. "Goodman's used to attacking his employers," observed one Stater more drolly, "but when students were in that role he kept maneuvering around but could never figure out a good posture from which to do that."

*Broadening the pool of students.* At the larger ventures such as Seattle, Penn and Dartmouth a number of the students consist of townspeople. Ira Einhorn was pleased to find that more than half the sixty-odd students in his McLuhan course were past 35. "All colleges must attract over-35s and bring them back to school," he argues with conviction. "The young hippies are so alienated from older people that they can't even talk to them. The over-35s can't understand how you can operate without a program like we do today. I'd tell them that my only program is what I'm doing at any given time. I don't think I got them to agreeing on much, but at least I got them in touch with one another."

FUP's open-door policy had one curious result for Einhorn when twelve right wingers showed up for three consecutive classes of his LSD course, the last time armed with cameras. One of them, a fundamentalist girl, became enraged when they started discussing the religious aspects of LSD. Asked if this didn't cramp his style, Einhorn replied off-handedly: "No. My policy is maximum jeopardy at all times."

At Dartmouth, junior Bob DuPuy had several townspeople in his course on "The Adolescent Subculture." "They enjoyed it and had as much to say as anyone," he reports, adding: "On the whole, in fact, they were more serious than the students. One older guy, a newspaper editor, used to drive 60 miles for every class, and do a lot of extra reading. I once asked him why he was taking the class and he replied, 'I've got several teenagers working for me, and I'm trying to learn how to get blood out of a stone.'"

A recent session of the DEC seminar on "Poverty in America" met in the easy chairs of the Union Lounge to listen to a community worker from rural Vermont. After the class, a young student nurse said she had read Michael Harrington's *The Other America* and was enjoying the course very much because it was teaching her how much poverty actually existed in this country. A soldier stationed nearby said he was there because "I'm against the poverty program, so I came to see what all the do-gooders are up to." Two high school girls reported they liked the seminar but didn't find the level of discussion any higher than in their high school. An older architect, a Dartmouth graduate, was taking the course with his wife and found it a welcome change from what he had known, because, "it puts the burden upon the individual."

*Developing new subjects and teaching methods.* If nothing else, free universities and experimental colleges have developed some strikingly creative courses and approaches to teaching. Almost every venture offers a few courses like "Bob Dylan and Other Folk as Contemporary Theologians" (Seattle), "The Philosophical Ramifications of Modern Drama: Or What in the Hell are We Doing in South Vietnam?" (Ohio State), or "The Biblical Roots of American Democracy" (Penn). The Free University of DeKalb (Illinois) offers not only "Eclectic Ecstasy" but an "Eclectic Ecstasy Laboratory."

Some ventures have made vigorous efforts to develop new teaching methods. Lawrence Lipton, teaching a course on "West Coast Avant-Garde Literature" at the Free University of California (Los Angeles), attempted a "reintegration of the arts in a workshop manner." In this "Teach-out" he employed tapes of poetry, films, a jazz combo and a "phono montage" of radio and TV commercials, football games and evangelical speeches.

At Penn, Ira Einhorn has been eager to come up with new approaches. "The first LSD class was in a huge lecture hall with lots of people, so I tried to break this down by turning out the lights and passing out candles and incense. This brought people closer together, made it more like a gathering, made people more conscious of one another's voices because they couldn't see faces. Then another time I spent a whole class period on four words—just put them on the board and let people free associate. I did a body eruption session using (Wilhelm) Reich, then a two and a half hour rock 'n' roll session and the next class gave a lecture on schizophrenia."

Though most free universities or experimental colleges have one or a few wild courses like this, the more striking fact is how conventional most of them are, in teaching approach if not course subject. "We need more daring people," complains instructor Paul Dorpat of Seattle's Free University. But too many participants feel like the Penn student who endorsed the lecture system used in his FUP course saying: "If somebody knows more about a subject than I, I expect him to lecture."

In Mike Vozick's experimental Biology I course at San Francisco State, the students quickly became dissatisfied with the random reports they were giving one another and decided that all future presentations should deal with cells. His students ended up taking the regular Biology Department exams as well as attending some of the laboratory sessions and lectures. "We're developing into a regular Biology I course," explains Vozick cheerfully. "The only difference is kids are learning because they want to, not because they have to."

If nothing else, these students' creations, by their very existence, constitute a damning critique of existing colleges and universities. That some faculty, administrators and townspeople are willing to involve themselves in the ventures indicates that the sentiment goes beyond mere youthful exuberance.

Political scientist Andrew Hacker, in a recent article on college presidents, noted that they often "prefer to work with the foundation-sponsored and government-underwritten programs that are rising parallel to the con-

ventional curriculum. . . . For it is at this margin that a president has his freest hand, in new territory where he does not face the barricades of departmental baronies." Cannot something of the same motivation be ascribed to free university and experimental college founders?

What better way is there to reform outmoded structures than to create a better model at the side? Of course this involves much more than most initial enthusiasts realize. It calls on them to debate issues of education. How do you learn? What should you learn? Who is qualified to teach? How do you create the best educational environment? Even if the practical pressures of running their own learning communities serve only to give these seditionists greater sympathy for the centuries-old dilemmas of education, the experiments might justify their existence.

But more than recognition of difficulties is occurring. The free universities and experimental college may be serving all higher education by having the gall to deal with the old problems in daring ways. They are discovering what it is that people really want to learn about, and are trying to create an environment in which this can be done. For every course that dies another will attract and hold an audience. Since the free curriculum must renew itself each semester, it can constantly question the validity of any course or field of learning. Their faculty failures are matched by the discovery of "born teachers." If too many classes rely on conventional methods, a few create and test exciting new approaches.

More than a century ago, American higher education was bogged down in the pious and anti-intellectual irrelevancy of its religious origins. Students then, as today, grew quickly frustrated and created their own literary and debating societies to examine more relevant issues. They discussed the topics of the day, invited stimulating speakers and developed libraries (in many cases overshadowing those of the regular institution). For decades, most college students belonged to these societies, which were their major source of intellectual stimulation. Finally, after the Civil War, the colleges and universities reformed themselves to the extent that the student societies were no longer essential, and they slowly died out. Historian of education, Frederick Rudolph, attributes this wave of change to the pressure of example exerted by the lively undergraduates. "What is remarkably instructive about what they did is how much more effective they were than the would-be reformers in the ranks of the presidents and professors."

Is a similar process beginning today? Some slight evidence can be detected. Many of the recent reforms in San Francisco State's system can be directly traced to the ferment of the Experimental College. A faculty committee at Dartmouth is trying to develop more experimental opportunities in the curriculum, and Dean Thaddeus Seymour says: "There's no doubt this is directly related to the success of the Experimental College." In a clear response to the challenge of the Free University, Penn this year offered for the first time eight wildly successful noncredit seminars conducted by top faculty members.

Perhaps the highest function of the student educators will be to work themselves out of a job.