

What is Nebraska's new Junior Division?

NU officials' dream becomes reality as plan is completed

by Chris Petersen.

Back in the first year of the "terrible thirties," university officials, led by Dean T. J. Thompson, talked and dreamed of "some sort of an improved advisory and guidance plan" for those men and women entering university. Passing of time, discussion, tentative plans, research, controversy, and finally today, almost a decade later, newly appointed Dean Nels Bengtson eagerly contemplates the opening of his Junior Division this fall, that dream brought to reality.

Streamlined education

Education's attempt to keep itself streamlined and on par with other fast developing movements of this "improvement" age, the division will completely revise the advisory system, provide vocational courses, and offer terminal courses with some sort of recognition at the completion of the course which would probably last two years.

Included in the functions of the new division, which only affect incoming freshmen will be:

1. The matriculation of all new students, except those entering professional colleges (law, dentistry, and medicine) in the university. Such matriculation would occur only once and any later transfer from college to college would be considered as a change of registration.

2. The assembling and making available to advisers information pertinent to the guidance of each new student. Such information might include high school scholastic and extracurricular records, tests records (psychological, achievement and aptitude), financial and social status, etc.

3. The counseling of new students. (Under this point comes the classification of students into five certain groups. These are explained below).

4. The advising and registering of all new students.

5. The offering of a general orientation course to be required of all freshmen during their first semester. The course would acquaint the student with the facilities which the university offers so that he may use them effectively in his education, and help him adjust himself to the university environment.

6. The attempting to discover deficiencies in students which impede their progress, and to provide means for removing these deficiencies as speedily as possible.

Terminal courses

7. The offering of one and two year curricula of vocational or terminal courses which meet the needs of students and which are not offered by any colleges of the university.

8. The developing experimentally of general courses and techniques which will improve the university's service to the students. Provision would be made ultimately for superior students to utilize fully the facilities of the university. In courses with large registration, special sections could be organized for superior students who could master subject in less time. Exceptionally able and well prepared students could be encouraged to demonstrate by examination that they possess certain skills or that they have mastery of certain subjects, and thereby could earn credit in or could be excused from taking courses otherwise required.

9. The cooperation with the colleges in developing a program of courses designed only for freshmen. The purpose of this point would be to limit courses to freshmen and provide instruction suitable for freshmen.

10. The cooperation with the colleges in studying critically the requirements of university entrance, admission into freshman curricula of colleges, and which the colleges may establish for admission into sophomore classes.

Dean is head

The functions of the division will be administered by Dean Bengtson, who will rank on par with the deans of other colleges, and a Board of Councillors.

The Board of Councillors will

consist of ten members. Six members of the board will be composed of representatives from each of the colleges now registering freshmen. Each will be nominated by the dean of the college and appointed by the Dean of Junior Division. The other four members will be as counselors for each of the following groups:

To be grouped

1. Group A. Would consist of students who had chosen a college and who appeared fully qualified to pursue the work of this college. Each of these students would be counselled by the counsellor who represents his college.

2. Group B. Would consist of students who had chosen a college but who exhibited deficiencies which would have to be removed before entrance into that college. Each of these students would be counselled jointly by the counsellor representing the college of his choice and the special counsellor for students entering with deficiencies.

3. Group C. Would consist of students wishing to pursue terminal (vocational) curricula offered by the University Junior Division only. Such students would be counselled by the special counsellor for students taking terminal curricula.

4. Group D. Would consist of students designated as adult special students by the university catalog. Such students would be counselled by the special counsellor for adult specials.

5. Group E. Would consist of students who had not yet made a choice of vocation or college. Such students would be designated as Unclassified Students, and would be counselled by the special counsellor for unclassified students.

First hint in '31

First hint of such a beneficial plan came in June, 1931, when Dean Thompson in making his fiscal report said, "I should like to see an attempt made to make the freshman year throughout the university a unit. If we could make the first year for all freshmen a so-called 'University Year,' it seems to me that in the course of that year a student could find out to a better advantage what he could possibly do under our present system those courses or course which he wished to pursue throughout the remaining three years. With such an organization, the freshmen could be handled under a competent corps of advisers and might in time be put under an entirely separate organization and be given separate instruction."

Two more years

Then followed two more years of planning and outlining of a separate division which Dean Thompson presented in his report to Chancellor E. A. Burnett and the board of regents. The plan was heard, contemplated and once again faded into the background.

Backed in Uni Senate

From December of 1936 until April of 1938, the plan was constantly in the spotlight with Dean Thompson and other officials of the university strongly backing it in reports and considerations in the University Senate. It was in December of 1937, after studying similar plans at universities over the country, the committee on the lower division plan, which had been appointed from the Senate, gave a detailed plan setting forth a possible framework and what could be accomplished under such a plan.

See two gains

In the report, committee members declared, "If such a university division were organized with the same independence of organization as is accorded the colleges; if it were given support of the college in formulating curricula mutually acceptable to the colleges and to the division; if it were granted control of the registration, education guidance, testing, and teaching of its students; and if the colleges were to agree upon minimum achievement in scholarship and credit hours before admission to the colleges is granted, then we believe it would be possible (1) to give freshmen



Journal and Star.
Dean T. J. Thompson.
...advocated Junior Division plan in 1931.



Journal and Star.
Chancellor C. S. Boucher.
...Junior Division accepted in his administration.

better educational guidance and (2) to provide better opportunities for teaching freshmen.

Would provide incentive

"In addition, it is our opinion that such a division may serve two other functions. It may provide an incentive to those who wish to enter the colleges and it may tend to keep those incapable of doing satisfactory work from entering the colleges."

It was after this complete report and plan had been submitted that the dream began to materialize. Committees were appointed to make changes where needed. The senate was interested in the plan.

Boucher adds ideas

It was then that Chancellor C. S. Boucher took over the guiding reins of the university. Full of new ideas, and seeing a need for changes in freshman teaching, guidance, and the advisory system, he began to work with other officials on the plan.

In October, 1939, the University Senate passed the bill calling for the establishment of the Junior Division as it is now and passed it onto the University of Nebraska board of regents for a final o. k.

Is now being set up

Last Saturday the regents met, gave the plan the final vote and elected Bengtson as new dean of the division. Now, the division is being set up.

When the university opens this fall, it will be with a new view on freshman students. Everything possible will be done to help them select courses most suitable to them, give the individual and his problems full attention, and help beginning students thru their most trying year.

Husker coed victim of purse snatcher

Miss Margaret Poyer, university student, had her purse snatched from under her arm near 14th and South streets yesterday. Among the contents were a fountain pen and personal articles and loss was reported as \$5.50. Miss Poyer described the thief as a young man about 20 years old.

Not a 'dumbbell' college or a 'flunkers mecca' ---new dean

The university's newest dean, Nels A. Bengtson, has two favorite joys in life—the Swedes and Nebraska's newly created Junior Division. But the Swedes get along alright by themselves so he turns his attentions to the Division.

What does he think about the new plan? Lots.

Putting it picturesquely, "It is a development designed to fit our unique educational conditions in Nebraska. Or we might say," he added, "That it is a serious effort on our part to provide as fully as possible, the advantages of a small college with the larger opportunities of a university."

No "dumbbell" college

A few moments later, "But, it is not a 'dumbbell' college. It's not for flunkers. The whole system is on a high plane with every safeguard taken for the rights and principles of the individual student."

Turning in the swivel chair, he continued, "There are three points which should be cleared up before we go further. First, there will be no curtailment of present opportunities. All opportunities of academic work will be retained.

New opportunities.

"Second, the Division will give new opportunities for scholastic endeavor arranged to meet needs that are not now provided.

"Third, the advisory system will be strengthened particularly through a careful gathering of data before the student comes to the university so that when he does enter, the advisor will have before him as complete case history as possible to obtain. On the

basis of that case history, a much higher quality of counselling can be obtained."

To satisfy a question that had chastised us for the first part of the interview, we queried, "How soon will you begin work on setting up the Division.

"Beginning will be made at once in setting up some phases of a terminal curricula. That is, the curricula, both general and vocational, will be offered to those students who can attend university for only a limited time, say two years. Some sort of recognition will be given those students who finish these terminal courses."

"No one must think that these terminal courses will be inferior to those which are offered in the four year course. They will be of just as high a caliber."

Praises chancellor

Dr. Bengtson was high in his praise for Chancellor Boucher and the part he played in obtaining the Junior Division. In his words, "The set-up was part of a vision by Chancellor Boucher who did all he could to help that vision become a reality."

Dean Bengtson, long acquainted with the numerous trials and tribulations of befuddled frosh, has had much experience in the field. He has conducted many youth surveys, directed courses in freshman lecture, and did much to bring the Division to this campus.

In this man's hands, whose age we wouldn't care to guess at, lies the destinies of those men and women who will be entering the university in the future.

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