

# Educational slavery, plight of the grad student

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The TA system has been coming under increasing attack. Since 1967, the Ford Foundation has given \$20.1 million to help 16 large universities reform their doctoral degree programs, including the TA system. The Ford Foundation plans to spend a total of \$44 million on the seven-year project, and the universities involved have agreed to put more than \$160 million of their own money into the reform effort.

In making the grants, the Ford Foundation denounced the "profligate waste of the nation's finest talent" caused by traditional patterns of doctoral education, especially in the humanities and social sciences. An important aim of the project has been to reduce graduate students' teaching loads and tighten faculty supervision of their training.

A report recently issued by the American Council on Education, an organization of national and regional education groups, focused on the TA system's effects on undergraduate instruction. It said that the teaching assistant faces "recurring conflict among his teaching duties, his duties as a student . . . and his duties as a professional apprentice in a discipline." He often cannot cope with his teaching assignment when faced with a group of undergraduates

among whom are individuals more intelligent or more aggressive, or both, than he," the report said.

The council's study concluded that "poor training and supervision" of teaching assistants contributes to "a general and serious deficiency in graduate education with concomitant failures in undergraduate education."

Such criticisms are echoed fairly widely here at the University of Colorado. At CU, 18,217 students are taught by 1,046 faculty members and 263 teaching associates like Erik Muller. The 4-to-1 faculty-to-TA ratio is about average for a large university. Some of the harshest comments on the system heard here come from present or former TAs. "It's sort of a tradition that you come as a TA and do the dirty work for a few years and then go off and dish it out yourself," says Tom Maddox, a former TA in economics who heads CU's Graduate Federation, a group that is trying to improve TA conditions.

Says a junior in humanities: "If a TA can teach well, he usually isn't well prepared, and if he's prepared, the chances are he's so tired that he's liable to fall asleep at the lectern."

Officials at CU, like those at other universities, say they need some form of TA system both for teacher training and for economic reasons:

They assert that using low-paid grad students as teachers is an economic necessity in much of U.S. higher education, because many schools can't afford to have regular faculty members teaching every class. Still, they say they are quite aware of the system's shortcomings.

Lawson Crowe, acting dean of CU's graduate school, says he would like to see the period of study between a bachelor's degree and a PhD reduced to four years. Now, students in the natural and physical sciences usually plan on five years to get a PhD, while candidates for PhDs in social sciences or humanities, where research funds are less plentiful, usually require seven or eight years.

Mr. Crowe says that in a four-year PhD program, TA duties would be limited to about one year. Prospective TAs would be screened carefully for aptitude and interest, and their pay would be higher than it is now. "My commitment is to do away with lingering poverty among graduate students," he says.

For the present, however, it appears that some schools are handing out grants and assistantships with less discrimination than in the past as they compete to build up enrollments. At CU last year, one department for instance, offered a TA job to an applicant without even check-

ing to see if his grades were high enough for admission to grad school; it turned out his grades were too low, and the embarrassed professors withdrew the offer.

All this isn't lost on Erik Muller. "You get the feeling that they aren't really concerned with the quality of teaching—that they're mainly interested in having certain courses covered and having you get the PhD," he says. "Many times I've been cautioned by professors not to let teaching get in the way of my own work."

Mr. Muller says he likes teaching and tries to be conscientious about it. In fact, he turned down better-paying assistantships offered by the universities of Wisconsin and Minnesota to come here in 1965 because Colorado offered him the opportunity to teach a wider range of courses. He received a bachelor's degree from Williams College in 1962 and a master's degree from the University of Oregon in 1965.

Nevertheless, he says he's far from being a polished instructor. One sort of student that gives him particular trouble is the "counterpuncher." This type, he explains, "rarely initiates anything, but he often can rebut very well a point you want to make and can make you look bad in the process."

He says he has had fair success by praising "counterpunchers," in

effect silencing them with flattery. "I don't know if it's effective educationally, but authoritatively it seems to work," he says with a shrug.

Mr. Muller currently teaches two classes in freshman composition for students for whom English isn't the principal language and one course in American literature for students of various grade levels. He's taking a course in Greek and another in modern poetry.

His TA appointment calls for a 20-hour workweek, but he actually puts in more time. He faces his classes nine hours a week, and he puts in about 15 hours a week meeting with his students in his office. More hours are required to prepare for the courses he teaches and to grade examinations and papers. All this, of course, is in addition to his own work as a student. "I don't have much time for doing nothing," he says.

Nor does Mr. Muller's salary allow much room for frivolity. He and his family live in a simply furnished, one-bedroom apartment in Boulder. The rent claims \$80 a month of his \$280 monthly take-home pay from the university. Another \$20 to \$25 a month goes to pay utility bills.

Erik and Ann economize in just about every way possible. They own a 1950 Chevrolet, but Erik walks the

two miles from home to the campus to save wear and tear on the car. The couple never goes out to dinner in a restaurant and rarely goes to the movies. They take turns attending free concerts at CU so they don't have to pay a babysitter.

Erik tries to make the best use of his summers by finding part-time work, but this has proved difficult in the Boulder area, he says. Last summer he failed to land a teaching job at an area college because senior instructors beat him to all the vacancies. He finally wangled an \$800 fellowship grant from CU to write a 60-page poem about Boulder (he has finished 45 pages and thinks it's pretty good), and he got another \$300 from the university for writing a correspondence course handbook for the CU extension center.

The Mullers thus far have stayed out of major debt (they owe a total of \$600 to their parents for various loans), but that's not wholly by choice. Last year Erik applied for a \$1,500 loan from the university, but his request was denied.

"They said they're already giving me \$3,000," he says angrily. "Giving it to me. They're not giving me anything. The fellow in the loan office said a family of three can live in Boulder for \$3,000, but that doesn't take into account new shoes, a new generator for the car or a trip to the dentist."

## Concept now reality with higher education

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According to Beck, no other major university has an experimental college identical to the Centennial College although the University of Delaware has a similar experiment and the University of Michigan conducts an honors college.

BECK BELIEVES that the encouragement of independent study is becoming common in higher education throughout the U.S. and has been unfortunately absent at the University.

Scribner views the Centennial College as providing two fundamental changes in the ordinary life of the freshman.

"The first change is the residential organization," he said Thursday. "The social contact with each other will reinforce the relationship the students have in the course study."

ACCORDING TO Scribner, it is important that the reinforcement work both ways so that the student does not feel as unhappy or lost in the University as so many freshmen do.

"The second change is the chance for innovation in teaching and learning," he added. "I would like to see the idea of classes abandoned entirely."

TEACHERS SHOULD retain the role of guiding students, but the students should be educated through interaction with one another.

The interaction has more of an effect on the student, and as a result he is more productive," he said.

Curt Donaldson, junior in teachers college and a member of the Centennial College committee, sees the role of the upperclassman in the college as that of a more experienced learner.

"We tried to use up-perclassmen in an intellectual experiment with Regents freshmen in Harper Hall," he said, "but we found that the time drain was too great."

ACCORDING TO Donaldson, this problem will be overcome by giving up-perclassmen academic credit for taking part in the program and leading discussion groups.

"In helping plan the college, we have suggested to the faculty on the Centennial Committee what we would have liked to have included in the curriculum if the college would have been for us," Donaldson added. "The faculty have been very receptive to our ideas and treated us almost as equals."

DONALDSON THINKS that few "gunners, in the traditional sense" will come out of the college.

"They will be concerned with things that matter without seeking the social reward as a main objective," he said. "They still will have time to help in the things that change the campus, but they won't be interested in many of the traditional activities."

## Baroness featured during 'Weekend'

The real Maria, Baroness Maria von Trapp, whose life inspired the hit musical "Sound of Music," will be featured speaker at the University "Centennial Weekend with Music" on Saturday.

She will tell a luncheon audience of "Weekend" participants of her life and adventures as mother and leader of the world-famous Trapp Family Singers.

Choral music from Trapp Family concerts as well as songs from the musical will be sung at the luncheon by the 34-voice Notre Dame Academy Choir of Omaha.

OTHER EVENTS at the day-long music festival include a performance by the Pro-Arte String Quartet of the University of Wisconsin and an afternoon at the opera, featuring Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro."

The morning program will

open in the Westbrook Music Building, with Professor Emanuel Wishnow, director of the school of music, giving an introduction to the "Weekend" and Professor John Zel, an introduction to the opera.

The Pro-Arte Quartet, the oldest musical organization of its kind in the world, was founded in Belgium in 1912. The Quartet, in residence at the University of Wisconsin since the outbreak of World War II, interprets chamber music from Hayden to the new music of today on national and international tours. Included in the Quartet are Norman Paul and Thomas Moore, violin; Richard Blum, viola, and Lowell Creitz, violoncello.

The eight annual "Weekend with Music" is sponsored by the school of music and the University extension division.

## Schedule altered Union to present bridal show

Two changes have been made in the Foreign Film Society schedule according to Tom Lonquist, chairman. "Battle of Algiers," scheduled for Feb. 5 has been replaced by "Repulsion." "Belle de Jour" scheduled for April 30 has been removed from the film list and no substitute has been found, Lonquist said.

The Nebraska Union Hospitality Committee and Howard Swanson will sponsor a boday show in the Nebraska Union ballroom Monday,

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