ACADEMIC GROWTH

ONE measure of the efficiency of a school or college, as with an industry, is considered to be its effectiveness in taking raw material and so handling it as to turn out a highly useful product. This concept, when applied to the Harrisonburg State Teachers College, requires us to trace three problems in its two decades of history: (1) the preparation of the students accepted by the college; (2) the preparation of the faculty and the quality of the conditions, particularly the curricula, with which these students were surrounded; and (3) the requirements laid down from time to time for graduation, or the completion of these curricula.

At the outset it is important to note how the ideals set forth by President Burruss in the first catalog have been a perpetual tradition in the life of the school. Among these were the following: that character building was the chief aim of the school; that sound scholarship was basic to the success of the teacher; that the acquiring of knowledge was for the purpose of teaching others; and that the work and life of the school should make for the development of the professional spirit and the desire to serve the children of the state.

It was to be expected that, with the foundations thus solidly laid and with the developing standards of the teaching profession, nationwide as well as statewide, it should be found that the school needed to change its function and its title. By 1915 the first change was made. The title “State Normal and Industrial School” gave way to the title “State Normal School for Women.” In 1916 the Virginia General Assembly gave the four normal schools the privilege of granting the Bachelor of Science degree and, by an agreement of the State Board of Education, this school and William and Mary College became centers for the training of teachers and other specialists in home economics. The increasing interest of Virginia’s young women in higher education in the state schools led the legislature again in 1924 to transform the four normal schools into state teachers colleges in line with the national trend. The increasing enrollment in the junior and senior classes in the college and the increasing numbers of Bachelor of Science graduates have fully justified this step. Entrance requirements, scholastic standards, and the training of the faculty have been greatly advanced to keep pace with these changes.

When the school opened in September, 1909, a faculty of fifteen members greeted the one hundred and fifty students who came during that first quarter. By the end of the ten-year period this faculty had been increased to twenty-two, and in 1930 it had reached forty, exclusive of the School of Music and the Training School. The levels of training may be seen in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation of Faculty</th>
<th>1909</th>
<th>1919</th>
<th>1930</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holders of Doctor's degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holders of Master's degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holders of Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holders of no degree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can readily be seen that the increase in amount of training has been very pronounced. Whereas in 1909 the typical preparation was less than the Bachelor's degree, it had come up to that level in 1919, and by 1930 the minimum and typical training had practically realized the Master's degree level. This clearly suggests that in another decade the center of gravity will easily be the Doctor's degree. In a similar way there has been a remarkable increase in the training of the supervisory or critic staff, members of which are employed jointly by the college and the local city or county school board. It does not appear that at the beginning there were any supervisors with the Bachelor's degree, but now all hold this degree. Three have the Master's degree and the majority have some work toward that degree. In other respects as well as this, it has been evident that both
President Duke and President Burruss have kept in mind the ideal stressed in the first catalog:

"In the selection of instructors the utmost care has been and will be exercised. The faculty will be composed of both men and women. Scholarship, character, personality, culture, and ability to teach have been considered. Particular care has been and will be taken to select those who know how to teach others how to teach."

In spite of the so-called "educational renaissance" of 1905, which materially extended the high school movement throughout rural sections of Virginia, there were but few good country high schools in 1909, and therefore it was necessary for the normal schools to accept students with relatively meager training. Hence the requirements at the first consisted of the completion of only the seventh grade but, in the second annual catalog, the statement of requirements for entrance into the most elementary course was as follows:

"The completion of two years of high school work, or the possession of a third grade teachers' certificate obtained by state examinations, or the equivalent, when approved by the faculty."

For several years the status of the high schools was such that students who had the fair equivalent of eight high school units were accepted. By 1919 the Normal School eliminated the courses comparable to the third year of high school work, but professional in nature, and eleven units were required for entrance into any curriculum. Actually by that time a very small number of students who were not high school graduates were coming to the college, and in 1920 the preparatory courses were eliminated entirely. Of the 209 entrants in 1909-1910, apparently not more than one in ten or twelve was a full high school graduate. With the raising of the standards, the accepted practice today is that of the other state higher institutions, namely to accept only high school graduates, except that by action of the State Board of Education teachers with a long experience and at least an elementary certificate may be entered on examination. As a result, in 1930-31, less than a score of the eight hundred students registered lack full high school graduation.

An interesting question arises as to the holding power of the school in the early days when a certificate to teach could be obtained for any one full year of work. Of the 209 students registered in the first year, 92, or 44 per cent, were registered in the second year, and many others returned later on.

With the changing needs of the state and the changing preparation of the entrants to the college, there have been important changes in the courses of instruction and in the curricula offered.

The first curricular offering was as follows:

I. Regular normal course, three to six years
II. Training class certificate course, one year
III. Professional course for four-year high school graduates, two years
IV. Household arts course, two years
V. Manual arts course, two years
VI. Rural arts course, two years

On the whole, there was relatively little change in the earlier years in the curricular offerings except that the more elementary courses were eliminated because of the improved preparation of students. In 1917 the curricula were overhauled with a view to offering degrees. Gradually the four general lines of work now offered were developed—namely, primary, intermediate (or grammar grade), high school, and home economics (industrial arts). Today the studies are organized into curricula as follows:

I. For kindergarten and primary grade teachers, two years.
II. For grammar grade teachers, two years.
III. For elementary teachers and supervisors, four years.
IV. For high school and junior high school teachers, four years.
V. For home economics teachers and specialists, four years.
Much more striking has been the change in the general content of these curricula. When the college became a member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, it was found to meet fully the standard requirement of the Association that the professional content be not excessive. The proportion of professional courses at Harrisonburg was then about eighteen per cent. If one contrasts the two-year curricula open to high school graduates in 1911, he finds that from forty to eighty percent of those curricula were professional in character and that in some there were almost no generally cultural or non-vocational elements. Today every curriculum requires at least one year of science and two or three years of English training, and all students in the four-year curriculum are required to have majors and minors in academic subjects.

At a very early date the faculty decided upon the use of the literal grading system, using the letters, A, B, C, D, and E, to indicate different degrees of success in academic performance. It was found at the end of the first ten years that having only three passing grades, A, B, and C, tended to develop too large a percentage of high grades. The additional letter F was added, D was made a passing grade, and E a conditioned grade. The faculty was asked to keep in mind the normal tendency of individuals to be widely distributed in any trait and the result has been that, with many changes in the faculty, the grading remains quite constant and tends to approximate the normal frequency curve.

In 1928 a new quality-point system was adopted to prevent weaker students from entering the training school and also to prevent young women from going out to teach who had barely passed their required courses. This system requires that a student make an average grade of C minus. In the meantime the college has further safeguarded its output by requiring that students of low scholastic achievement who for two quarters fail to make at least half of their subjects be dropped from the roll. The requirements in the four-year curriculum have also been raised from 180 quarter hours to 186; and in June, 1933, the requirement is to become 192 quarter hours.

Progress has especially been evident in the summer school offerings. The preliminary announcement of summer school courses in 1911 indicated that from the outset there was to be a full quarter of work, an innovation at that time. Courses preparing students for the state examinations for the first, second, and third grade certificates were supplemented by courses to prepare for the new Professional Primary Certificate and by a limited number of courses from the winter session curricula. This certificate and its successors, the elementary certificate group, were first obtainable in two six-weeks summer terms, then in three six-weeks summer terms, and still later in three eleven-weeks summer terms. After the summer of 1931 the elementary certificate will no longer be issued, and when issued this summer to new teachers it will be good for only one year. The offering of the summer sessions steadily changed until by 1921 a small number were being graduated from the two-year and four-year curricula by combining summer work and winter session credit. In recent years between forty and fifty students have completed these curricula each summer, many of them doing all the work in summer sessions. Since 1921 the standard has steadily risen until the preponderance of offerings in the summer are for sophomores and for juniors and seniors instead of for students with only a high school diploma or less than a high school diploma. Within a few years, because of the passing of the elementary certificate, it should not be necessary to offer freshman and sophomore courses in any number except for students who have deficiencies to make up, or are entering by transfer from other schools.
From the outset the school has given its graduates systematic help in locating satisfactory positions. This work has been enlarged and developed until now there are kept detailed data in regard to each graduate, ready to be sent to prospective employers on request. These consist of photographs, data that the student furnishes about her preparation and interests, and data prepared by the training school and college teachers. Much interesting evidence is had from alumnae and employers that this is a most appreciated service of the college. Thus, in terms of our foreword, the raw materials carefully chosen and selectively developed, have been tested and proved, and then routed to those points where needs are urgent. Thereby the daughters of the college become the faithful servants of the children of Virginia.

WALTER J. GIFFORD

JULIAN A. BURRUS: HIS VISION AND HIS PLANS

“Where are the dreams of the dreamer?
Where is the vision? ’Twas holy;
Can it be lost in the night?

We are the dreams of the dreamer.
Think you his eyes as he journeyed?
Know you the price that he paid?”

FROM the beginning it was manifest that the eye-sweep of President Julian A. Burruss covered no less than a quarter of a century. The words “within the next twenty-five years” were repeatedly on his lips, and his large plans always included the thousand students for whom he was building. But his vision of the real and spiritual significance of the work had no bounds of time or space. He stood at the vertex of the angle, whence the scope broadened illimitably.

He was also able to impart his visions to others—to the board of trustees, to the students, to the teachers. They caught his spirit and believed in his belief. They were his fellow-workers in a high purpose. Those early faculty meetings were so stimulating that we sometimes could not sleep after their late adjournment even, but would lie awake seeing the possibilities and rejoicing in the Virginia which was to be.

And yet Mr. Burruss’s far-seeing did not prevent, but necessitated, near-seeing. “I never saw such an eye for details,” declared one of the trustees. The practical man who went the rounds of inspection in the evenings after the workmen had gone, who knew how to take their tools in his own hands, if necessary, and do their job just right, was the same who had all day toiled in thought behind the president’s desk. But on that desk lay a copy of Wordsworth, in which pulsed always

“Among least things
An undersense of greatest.”

Immediately after his election on June 26, 1908, the young president laid down his work at Columbia University, foregoing for a while the doctor’s degree almost within his grasp, in order to visit other states and take counsel of the heads of their institutions, studying plans, faculties, and equipment so as to learn what might be best to do and best to avoid in founding this new school.

His ideals and policies—living realities to those who watched him work them out—can not be better stated than in his own words, gleaned here and there, chiefly from his well-remembered talks and from his writings of the year one of this college.

“The greatest possible foresight should be exercised, and the school should be planned for the future as well as for the present . . . a large school, capable of ultimately accommodating at least a thousand students, with boarding space for about three-fourths of that number. The complete scheme should be projected now, and every building erected as a permanent part of the original plan . . . The buildings should be substantial and modern.