

Numerical Analysis of the [A.A.C.R. Questionnaire](#) on the Duties of the Collegiate Registrar

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The material that you have just received constitutes a complete numerical analysis of the [A.A.C.R. questionnaire](#) on the duties of the collegiate registrar. It also constitutes a summary of a preliminary inquiry into the functions of the office conducted by the Committee on Special Projects of our Association. It may be likened to a type of educational X-ray applied to that strong right arm of school administration generally referred to as the registrar's office.

In presenting the report-the unusual size of which is due solely to the widespread interest and hearty co-operation of the membership-no claim is made as to the completeness of this initial investigation. As is true in most studies of this nature, additional suggestions continued to present themselves long after the questionnaire was off the press. However, the form does represent a Careful compilation of questions wrought from years of close-range experience substantiated by the written and oral opinions of registrars and others who are familiar with the duties and responsibilities of the office. It is interesting to note that in few instances were added functions written in on the questionnaire by answering registrars. The ultimate purpose of the questionnaire will be more fully explained later; but if the report now in your hands should do no more at this time than present to you a functional comparison of your office with the offices of your colleagues in institutions similar in type, it will have been worth the time and effort involved in its construction. Moreover, a comparison of your practices with those of registrars representing institutions of varying types is both interesting and profitable. Such a consideration can easily result in improved techniques and even in changed attitude and educational outlook.

I think I am safe in saying that the success of any educational association depends upon the extent to which it can prove its value to its membership. The meetings that are planned and held, and the printed bulletins that are published have their distinctive worth;

but unless such an association can offer frequent constructive suggestions founded upon an accurate intimacy with the everyday problems of its clientele, it cannot claim that it is rendering the maximum of service. One does not need to go very far in an investigation of the functions of the office such as that with which we are identified before one discovers variations that are wide and significant. These differing practices and administrative relationships are most interesting, as they reflect either the peculiar needs of a particular type of school or the pursuit of traditional practices that have prevailed for years even though they might not be satisfactory. From time to time our functions are referred to as being professional in their nature. Indeed, in the majority of the reporting institutions the registrar is given an academic rating that places him clearly within the ranks of those whose services are unquestionably professional. This fact may easily be the cause of gratifying reflection, but it carries with it a definite challenge that cannot be denied. If the registrar is to maintain his right to professional distinction, it will be through his demonstration of the professional attitude in his work and outlook. In view of the remarkable advancements made in the professions through the agency of investigation and research, there is no denying the importance of the adoption of the analytical method by the registrar and his association.

In 1930 there was organized in this country the National Committee on Standard Reports for Institutions of Higher Education. Mr. West, of the University of Minnesota, represents the A.A.C.R. on this committee. The group was established because of a growing need among many educational institutions for recognized standards of financial reporting and accounting for colleges and universities. One of the first moves made by this committee was the appointment of a working unit to consider the problems of uniform terminology and reporting. According to the committee's published report, it is not a standardizing agency with power to require colleges and universities to adopt its recommendations, but it has as its purpose the formulating of principles to be followed in the preparation of financial and statistical reports of colleges and universities, with a view to securing the adoption and acceptance of those principles. The ultimate object is to achieve general

statistical and controlling bodies. Over the past five years this national committee has worked steadily at its problems, and institutions of higher education have co-operated by making practical applications of its suggestions-giving the committee the benefit of their experiences.

In addition to formulating valuable and workable principles for use in financial accounting, the committee has delved into the problem of unit costs and has recommended the adoption of a uniform system of student accounting-the general acceptance of which will bring about a standardization that is sure to eliminate the confusion that is now so apparent in enrolment statistics.

A collective enterprise such as the one to which I have just referred is quite possible through the agency of the A.A.C.R. The Committee on Special Projects and the editor of our bulletin deserve commendation for the splendid work that they are doing in encouraging the type of endeavor that will distinguish our organization as one interested in the discovery of the controlling and principles that underlie educational procedures. All of us need to realize that individually and collectively we do not do as much study and research as is needed to stimulate healthy growth.

And now, may I present as briefly as possible statements relative to the exact purpose of the inquiry, the extent of the survey, the nature of the preliminary report, and, finally, a few observations and recommendations based upon the findings embodied in the report

Purpose of Inquiry. First, to make an analysis of the standard duties of the collegiate registrar as they are performed in institutions of varying types and sizes. This initial study is the Association's first attempt to gain a nation-wide perspective of the office of the registrar in institutions of higher education. Second, to study this analysis with a view to determining which of our findings constitute appropriate subjects for further co-operative study on the part of sub-committees of the Committee on Special Projects.

Extent of Survey. The original questionnaire was designed to obtain first-hand information relative to the following matters:

(a) Personal information-the nature of the registrar's education, length and nature of his educational service, his equivalent academic ranking in the faculty, length of service as registrar in the institution with which ¹~s, is now identified, and total years of experience as a collegiate registrar.

(b) The registrar's estimate of the major functions of his office-listed in the order of their importance.

(c) A study of these major functions-for the purpose of determining the extent to which the registrar is in administrative control. Of equal importance were the questions designed to reveal the administrative relationships of the registrar and the exact nature of his relationship to the functions listed. The major functions included in the inquiry were admissions, registration, recording, personnel, graduation, publications, and a grouping of miscellaneous activities usually associated with the office. The form was so constructed as to allow for indications that the functions were or were not performed; and also for the expression of positive or negative opinion relative to their performance by the registrar.

(d) A total of 667 questionnaires were mailed to the members of the Association and 525 were marked and returned. Of this number, 504 were received in time to be included in this report. Each questionnaire contained 213 questions; and this most generous response of the membership resulted in the tabulating, checking, and summarizing of 107,352 separate items.

(e) Throughout the study the following divisions as to institutional types were observed as they coincide with the groupings reported in the annual enrolment abstract published by the Association. After the name of each type the number of responses is given: Universities, 130; liberal arts colleges, 229; teachers colleges and normal schools, 65; junior colleges, 40; technical schools, 26; and agricultural and mechanical arts colleges, 14; total, 504.

Nature of the Preliminary Report. The report, as you have observed from reading the index on the cover page, is compiled according to the types of institutions indicated above. The tabulations on all of the functional questions have been conveniently grouped in these natural divisions, to facilitate reference to the specific practices of all reporting registrars of institutions of similar type. By referring to the condensed data in other sections of the report, a registrar may compare his practices with those representing institutions dissimilar in nature; and, finally, if he wants to behold a picture of the composite registrar, he may refer to the last six pages, upon which have been combined the digits representing the way in which 504 registrars would work if they were molded into the form of one gigantic being. (For the sake of the timid freshman, may we here express the fond hope that such a Century of Progress

consolidation may never be possible.) The original intention of the compiler was to present the summaries for universities, liberal arts colleges, and teachers colleges in two or three divisions, according to size of institution; but when it was discovered that such a refinement would result in a ninety-page report, the plan had to be abandoned. These data are available in sub-divided form on the work sheets and will be valuable for use in further research by sub-committees assigned to special projects.

The amount of time required for the checking, tabulating, and interpretation of entries-not to mention the re-checking and mimeographing-precluded any possibility of the thorough review of the findings that was originally contemplated. As the responses continued to mount, it became more and more apparent that the mere presentation of the report, without comment, would be a most worthy goal. Even this was possible only because of the fine cooperation of a splendid corps of office assistants. Indeed, as the pressure of accumulating responses steadily gained on the rapidly dwindling pre-convention days, the compiler finally decided to present his voluminous report and feebly make just one requestnamely that he be permanently excused from any further work on the project.

Although the report is one that must be studied carefully by each registrar before its value of application may be realized, and although the Committee on Special Projects will be obliged to make a studious analysis of the summaries before deciding upon the most appropriate avenues of future research, I beg to present first a few interesting observations and then make some recommendations for further study which I deem to be worthy of the committee's consideration:

Observations. (1) Two hundred and ninety-three, or 58 per cent, of the 504 registrars responding to the questionnaire are men; 211, or 42 per cent, are women. In the university group 103 of the 130 registrars, or 79 per cent, are men; whereas in the liberal arts college group there is a larger per cent of women registrars-120 of the 229, or 52 per cent. A similar per cent of difference in favor of the women registrars obtains in the teachers college and normal school group. Were the statistics available, a very interesting statement concerning trends would be possible.

(2) Among the 504 responding registrars, the following is observed with respect to the extent of their formal education:

179, or 36 per cent, hold the Bachelor's degree
 185, or 37 per cent, hold a Master's degree
 52, or 10 per cent, hold a Doctor of Philosophy degree
 8, or 1.58 per cent, hold a Bachelor of Laws degree
 45, or 9 per cent, hold some other degree
 34, or 7 per cent, hold no degree

In both the university and liberal arts college groups, 35 per cent (over one-third) of the registrars hold Masters degrees, and 10 per cent hold the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

There is a very encouraging indication that graduate work is being pursued by a substantial portion of the 179 who hold the Bachelor's degree, and also by those who have earned their first graduate degree.

(3) The prevailing academic ranking in the faculty to which the registrar seems to be entitled is that of professor. One hundred and eighty-three of the 504, or 35 per cent, made this indication. If the other two professorial rankings-associate and assistant professor - are added, the total is 276, or 55 per cent. It is interesting to note that 54, or almost 11 per cent, have a ranking equivalent to that of a dean.

(4) A brief analysis of the educational experience of the registrar reveals a rather substantial background of high school and college teaching and administrative work on both of these levels. One hundred and ninety-three reported a term of educational service from 11 to 20 years in length; 120 indicated from 21 to 30 years; and 57, or 11 per cent, over 30 years.

(5) The stability of the service of the registrar is certainly evident as we ponder some unusual figures. In the chart showing total years of experience as a registrar, 234 of the 504, or 46 per cent, have been registrars for 10 years or more; 42, or 8 per cent, have had the title over 20 years; and 10 can claim a term of service exceeding 30 years.

(6) Although it is difficult to evaluate functions and place upon them a mark of comparative priority in importance, one section of the questionnaire called for such an adjudication, and, believe it or not, the nation-wide listing is as follows, based upon the total number of first, second, and third places assigned to each function: First, recording, 316; second, admissions, 292; and third, registration, 269.

(7) From the indications afforded by the "A" and "R" (positive

questions concerning this branch of the service and the comparatively few indications that the function was performed in any office other than that of the registrar, would lead an observer to

that, after all, the registrars of the country are primarily recorders of academic achievement. The admissions tabulations reveal a wide variation in practice, due to two things-separate admissions offices and the assumption of this function by deans' offices. Even in registration there is a sufficient number of negative replies to an investigation to determine why so many registrars denied responsibility for even the basic procedures in this important function. The specialized nature of the duties that are now grouped

under personnel and publications seems to be demanding the services of separate departments, and more and more-especially in the larger institutions-the registrar is not conspicuous because of his activity therein. These attach themselves quite tenaciously to the offices of the registrars of most of the smaller institutions. And now, finally, may I present a few recommendations for

further study as revealed in a rather cursory survey of the report: *The Selection of the Registrar*. A review of the tabulations in the

personal information section of the questionnaire causes one to "How did these people come to be registrars? Did they come into their present position by virtue of a definite plan? What is the best type of training for the preparation of those who are to be collegiate registrars? Should their educational background be academic, theoretically educational, or business in its nature? Is it essential that registrars have teaching experience? Do colleges and universities study the needs of the office enough to know the types best suited for this important station? What method of selection is used-and what is the practice with respect to selection as between one who has or has not served as an assistant in the office?"

Studies designed to answer such questions-particularly concerning the best type of training for the prospective registrar the registrar in service-would be worthy of our Association.

The Development of Standard Terminology. Although the members who returned the questionnaires are to be commended for their interest and enthusiastic response, it must be said that frequent interpretation was necessary before tabulation could proceed. It is still apparent that we need a standardized definition of "net enrollment." In many instances the figures given for 1933-34 did not agree with those reported in the Association's annual report on

enrolment, and the uncertainty reflected by separate designations of summer session totals as well as by other instances of statistical haziness opens the way for an Association action that will define the exact weight of a pound wherever it may be found. There is also a need for more clarity in the use and application of the terms "graduate" and "professional." Some colleges offering junior level work only, gave evidence of having postgraduate and professional courses. A general confusion of the use of the word "professional" crept through the entire stack of questionnaires to such an extent as to suggest that the Association might well afford to make an accurate inquiry here for the purpose of establishing a standard of differentiation that could be recommended for universal adoption.

Relation of the Registrar to the General School Standards in the State. This suggested study is prompted by the apparent difference in what I have called the "reach" of the registrar's office, as indicated in certain answers on the questionnaires. To be sure, in some state institutions the matter of high school studies and college entrance requirements relate themselves definitely to the registrar's office, and in some instances this relationship is quite clear, even in non-state schools. More and more state departments of education are looking to the colleges and universities for expression of opinion in significant educational matters. The question of the leadership exerted by the officer who has at his command such a wealth of valuable data naturally arises, and an Association study of the possibilities of the development of this leadership by the registrar seems most appropriate.

Functions of the Registrar. A review of the 504 returns leaves one with a conviction that local situations play a tremendous part in determining just how the registrar should perform the various functions assigned to his office. As indicated, there is greater uniformity

in recording procedures than in any other division of our work. though we must recognize the effect of the local institutional pattern, we should not allow that factor to preclude the possibility of advancement. For example, in large institutions the old method of grade recording and transcription was for years considered practice. More recently the adoption of the blueprint, photostat, and other mechanical devices has resulted not only in the reduction of error but also has made possible a great saving of time in the est of the student, faculty, and registrar. Might it not be possible the Association to make an analysis of each of our most important

functions, with a view to publishing what seem to be best practices? These recommendations could contain a sufficient bility with respect to details, but provide general principles which when adopted would standardize these procedures.

Registrar-Administration Relationships. In a consideration of matter, the returns reveal the fact that in the majority of instances the registrar is exerting an influence that is professional in its nature. However, there are entirely too many indications that some registrars do not enjoy a type of faculty or administrative relationship that would raise their offices above a mere clerical level. The absence of comparative data makes an indication of trends or predictions impossible. An Association analysis of these relationships would enable every registrar to make a comparative study of his own situation, so that he could increase his administrative effectiveness.

Other recommendations are as follows:

1. Nation-wide study of student retention.
2. Study of course patterns in educational institutions throughout the country.
3. Comparative study of academic achievement in various particular divisions.
4. Study of grades, grading and testing
5. Study of trends in the character of the office of the registrar as an index of its future scope of educational

In closing, may I, in behalf of the committee, express sincere appreciation of your loyal interest in this preliminary study. It is hoped that out of it may develop co-operative studies that will assist all of us in attaining a degree of excellence in the administration of our functions that would not otherwise be