

# DIRECTED STUDIES A SUCCESS AT YALE

## 40 Students With All Courses Prescribed First Two Years Excel Unrestricted Youths

### PLAN TO BE TRIED 5 YEARS

### Then Findings on It Will Go to Faculty for Action—May Alter Higher Education

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NEW HAVEN, April 28—An educational experiment of far-reaching significance, carried on at Yale University during the last two years, gives evidence that students who take a prescribed course of studies do better work than those in the traditional liberal arts division who are permitted to choose their own subjects.

Already beginning to attract country-wide interest, the Yale plan, known as the program of directed studies, may throw light on the controversial issue of required courses versus free electives. The University of Chicago and St. John's College in Annapolis have led the fight for a prescribed curriculum. During the past several years many colleges and universities have modified their program of free electives by requiring students to take a common core of studies.

Yale officials disclosed today that the experiment would become a regular part of the college curriculum. At the end of five years the program is to be evaluated, and turned over to the faculty for action. This may mean, Dr. William C. Devane, dean of the college, pointed out, that Yale will alter its course of studies to provide more required subjects than it does at present. Higher education in general may be influenced by the Yale results.

#### Program May Be Expanded

In the fall of 1946 the college permitted forty students to enter upon the directed studies program. This was a voluntary decision on the part of the students, but once they took this step their entire program was mapped out for them for the first two years of their college life. Forty students were selected a year ago, while this fall the number may be increased to a maximum of seventy.

During their freshman year the students in this program take mathematics, literature, philosophy, language and science. No deviations of any kind are permitted. Regular Yale faculty members are assigned to teach this group. The students are the same in every way as the rest of the undergraduates, except that their program is prescribed for them by the college.

The students in the experimental program show greater interest in their studies and more enthusiasm for their courses, faculty members say.

Highly pleased with the results thus far, Dr. Devane declared that the extension of the program to a greater number of students would be profitable. He observed that the experiment showed the value of uniformity of experience for the first two years of the students' academic life.

In time, he added, Yale may adopt a modified form of the directed studies plan. Not all courses should be required, he pointed out, but more common experiences are necessary. Dr. Devane suggested that a core of three required courses might be required the first two years, and then the student should get freedom of choice for the last two.

#### Many Advantages Seen

"Our experimental program is proving its case to the hilt," Dr. Devane said. "We are beginning to recognize that a certain amount of direction is necessary for the college student during the first two years."

A common program during the freshman and sophomore years, he held, has many advantages. The students want the intellectual guidance, he declared, adding that they appreciated the help they are receiving in setting up their program.

Dr. Devane stressed that the directed studies at Yale differed considerably from the Chicago or St. John's programs. Primarily, he pointed out, the Yale plan covered the first two years only, instead of four years. Moreover, Yale is not stressing the classics or the great books.

According to Dr. Devane, the required program has as its base courses in philosophy. The present-day world is considered as the important springboard for education; from the contemporary scene the students turn backward to the ancient civilizations.

For the directed study plan new teaching methods have been introduced and new courses added. In several of the courses three or four faculty members participate on a joint basis, to discuss the subjects with the students. For example, in the history courses the students hear from the historians, the political scientists and the economists. Similarly, in the social science courses, the combined talents of the sociologists, economists, political scientist: and psychologists are available.

"This program makes sense to the students," Prof. Maynard Mack, one of the pioneers in setting up the experiment, said. "They get common intellectual experiences which incites them to discuss their work."