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1958, Faculty Orientation

THE ALUMNI LOOK AT THE COLLEGE

The Session opened at 9:30 A. M. (Wednesday, September 10, 1958) in the Auditorium with Dr. Earl Lewis, Head of the Department of Political Science and Moderator, in the Chair. Three of the four members of the Alumni Panel were on the stage with him in the persons of Miss Jean K. Norris, Dr. Edward W. Guinn and Mr. Lavaniel Henderson. After presenting a brief review of what had gone before in the preceding sessions of the orientation Dr. Lewis observed:

It occurs to me that there are at least two basic reasons why you may be particularly interested in the panel discussion today. The participants as Alumni of the college constitute living, indisputable evidence of that fact that Prairie View has been productive of much that all of us may take pride in. We have many graduates of the college on its staff who reflect the effectiveness of some of the teaching which has taken place here. We sometimes get so caught up in the deficiencies of the mass of our students that we find ourselves in the position of one who is too close to the forest to see the trees. Father Celestine Steiner, of the University of Detroit said something that seems pertinent here: "If our Alumni are liabilities, when God Help us. For what else do we who are in education have to show for our lives."

The presence of these alumni panelist here today, continued Dr. Lewis, are perhaps of special interest to most of you because they remind us, quite impressively, that all of our Prairie View Alumnus are not academic liabilities. Rather, our panelist, as well as many of our alumnus who are members of the staff and others throughout the country are creditable assets.

Addressing himself to the second reason for assuming faculty interest in the panel, Dr. Lewis pointed out the staff's position as academicians and educators serving in an institution and, by definition, genuinely interested in the improvement of the quality of the educational instruction within that institution. "Assuming that interest, said the moderator, a panel of relatively recent graduates are in an enviable position to give

valid information regarding our strengths and weaknesses. The Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in Standard X provides what I think is the fundamental justification for the place of this panel of alumni on the conference program. If we agree with Standard XI that the records made by the students of any institution in other colleges and universities to which they may have been transferred will be an important factor in determining its effectiveness, then Standard X which reads: "if adequate information were obtainable in regard to the attitude and achievements of those who have attended an institution, it would serve as a sufficient single standard for accrediting. . ." gives special pertinence to what these men and women have to say today.

After the introduction of the panel Dr. Lewis introduced the panel. He explained that Miss Charlye O. Farris, Attorney at Law (A. B., 1948 and LL.B., Howard University) had wired Dean Drew the night before from Wichita Falls her regrets at not being able to attend the session today. He then presented Miss Jean K. Norris, a graduate of the college with the Bachelor of Arts in English in 1951 with "great distinction". It was indicated that she has the Master's of Arts in Journalism from the State University of Iowa (1953) and had done further study in English and American Literature at the University of Michigan in 1957. She has taught at Jackson College in Mississippi for a year and has been employed at Prairie View since 1957. Miss Norris, in 1953, was honored when Station W.H.O. (Des Moines, Iowa) extended its award "For Excellence in Radio News Writing at the State University of Iowa. Miss Norris is also a member of the Alpha

Kappa Mu National Honor Society, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and Theta Sigma Phi National Fraternity for Women in Journalism. Miss Norris also went in 1955 on the National Student Association 75 day Economics and Politics Tour of Europe.

Dr. Lewis then presented Dr. Edward W. Guinn, who graduated from the college with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry in 1945. He entered the Armed Service for a term of duty. After his release he did graduate work in Biology and Chemistry at Howard University during the academic years 1946-47. He came to Prairie View to teach in 1948 and served as instructor in Chemistry until 1951. After a year of further study in Chemistry at the University of Colorado, Dr. Guinn, in the fall of 1952 entered the University of Texas Medical School at Galveston, from whence he was graduated in 1956. He did his internship at the Philadelphia General Hospital (1956-57) and held a residency in general practice in the Lower Bucks County Hospital in the same state. He is now in general practice in Fort Worth, Texas.

The final panelist, Mr. Lavaniel L. Henderson, was graduated with the B. S. in Agriculture in May of 1949. He took the Master of Science degree in Plant Physiology and Agricultural Botany at the University of Minnesota in December of 1950, and did further study in Plant Pathology and Botany at the same school in the capacity as assistant for the next two years. Between 1952 and 1954 Mr. Henderson was Research Assistant at the Carver Research Foundation, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. Since 1954 Mr. Henderson has been Assistant Professor of Biology in Texas Southern University, Houston, Texas. During the tenure of his present position he participated in the Institute of Botany for College teachers at Cornell University in the summer of 1957 on a National Science Foundation Fellow-

ship and was given a grant by the same foundation for summer work in science in 1958 at the University of Texas. For the fall of 1958 he holds both a Research Assistantship and a National Medical Fellowship for study at the University of Minnesota which covers the current academic year. Mr. Henderson has published widely in professional journals in his specific field and in the related teaching emphasis of science.

The moderator chose as the method of presentation for the session the proposing of a series of questions to which the members of the panel might react as they saw fit. The first question proposed was as follows:

What in your view are the most important general qualities, skills competences or attitudes a good college should give its students during their college careers?

Miss Norris:

1. The college should give the student a sense of the enthusiastic transfer of knowledge to which he by the resulting contagion becomes a party to the pursuit of knowledge.
2. The desire to excell ones own achievement. The college should be careful to create the atmosphere where the student does not become complacent with the minor achievement of being better than those around him. The student should be given the stimulus of universal standards of achievement.
3. He should be shown the correlation of varied types of knowledge, because in his recognition of the basic unity of knowledge he will find the keys to human development and progress.
4. Finally, the student should be given a sense of the historical grounding of present knowledge and the futuristic extension of its implications.

Dr. Guinn:

Dr. Guinn agreed with much that Miss Norris had said and added a significant point of his own. He said that the college should provide a good broad general basic education. Deploing the current emphasis upon science and technocracy, Dr. Guinn indicated that his medical training and experience had shown the need of an education that stressed the qualities of sound living and the achievement of inner peace and harmony.

Mr. Henderson:

He remembered that there had been, or seemed to have been at one time an emphasis on preparing students only to work in Texas, and gave in evidence the statement so often used in our publicity materials to the effect that we are trying to serve the people of Texas at the point of their greatest need. He was not sure whether that orientation still prevailed or not, and that if it did, he felt that it may not be as prominent as it once was if the students he knew about and the program of the college as he knew it could be considered valid.

Dr. Lewis, the moderator, then asked the second question:

Identify those areas where we at the college seem to be weakest.

Miss Norris:

This panelist thought we were weakest in our attitude toward the student. She felt that there was a tendency in the college to look down upon the student. She felt that this attitude was communicated to the student, and, he reacting to it felt no challenge to do realize his highest potential. She felt that there should be serious consideration of this attitude.

Dr. Guinn:

Dr. Guinn felt that we were weakest in our attitude toward three principal areas of the college life, viz., the Student, the Faculty and Administration and the Alumni. The over-all tone of our approach to these three areas was one of complacency and indifference. He reminded us that the old notion that students would come to Prairie View no matter what the condition of our plant or the attitudes of our staff was a mistake. He cautioned the college to change its ways so that the three segments mentioned above might benefit.

Mr. Henderson:

This panelist agreed with all that had been said by the other two. He added the comment that indifference limits the goals of the student and results in a feeling of insecurity on his part that is definitely detrimental to his progress and future.

Dr. Lewis, the moderator, proposed the third question thus:

Where are we strong in the preparation of the student?

Miss Norris, Dr. Guinn and Mr. Henderson were of the collective opinion that:

1. Comparing our teachers with those in schools on the professional level, the Prairie View teacher was generally adequately prepared.
2. Dr. Guinn felt that the Natural Science Department is the strongest because it is oldest in the point of continuity of

the staff and its graduates to his knowledge have made the highest records in the Graduate Record Examination. Dr. Guinn felt that all of the college branches could profit by their example. He, however, was sure that the rest of the college was doing a good job.

3. Mr. Henderson was pleased by the fact that our standards were up and that you actually had to pass the courses.

The moderator then raised the question of "What is good teaching?"

Miss Norris emphasized again the need for a philosophy, enthusiasm, and for the purveying of information that is useful. She felt she could reduce her criteria to four items:

1. Knowledge of subject matter
2. Daily preparation
3. Variety of methods
4. Interest in the student as an individual

Dr. Guinn was in agreement with what Miss Norris said and added three of his own. To him a good teacher - -

1. Has a way of life, a conscious philosophy of life from which his work begins.
2. Should be adequately prepared, for there is no substitute for knowledge.
3. Should want to teach.

Mr. Henderson was in general agreement with the other panelist and added the following:

1. Give the students the fundamentals. Students need this for their current work and for future preparation. This is not only true for skills, but for attitudes as well.
2. Should relate or reveal to the student some unsolved problem or problems in his given area of interest.

The moderator addressed his final question to the panel, thus:

"What implications do you feel that integration in higher education in Texas has for Prairie View College?"

Mr. Henderson was of the opinion that we could very well look forward to the day when there would be both white faculty and students on our campus. He was sure that there need be no fear of the vanishing of the Negro college if it kept itself alert and competent for the common educational task ahead.

Miss Norris thought we ought to try to make students aware of what is ahead, and give them a sense of the meaning of real competition on a non-racial basis. She felt that through lectures,

student exchange and many other devices we could sponsor a program of "readiness".

Dr. Guinn closed the panel with the observation that integration must and should come for the survival of Prairie View. He agrees that there would always be the need for a good college here--not a good Negro college. The good students are going to the white school as it is possible for them to enter. If the Negro college is going to get its share of good students it is going to have to enter into direct competition with the white college. This will be a good thing for those schools that survive the competition.

George R. Woolfolk,
Recorder

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