



## THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA PSYCHOLOGICAL GUIDANCE CENTER

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That there are many factors making for more or less happiness, efficiency, and success entering into any student's life, and that some students have problems they are unable to solve unaided, are facts recognized by anyone affiliated with educational institutions. But that there are means, efficacious, acceptable, definite . . . scientific, if you please, by which success and readjustment can largely be inducted into those lacking them is less well known. The fact that such means can be installed in any university, eventually becoming self-supporting, contributing mightily to the solution of personality, vocational, study, social, and moral problems of students seems an ideal which has received little thought and even less planning.

The University of Oklahoma Psychological Guidance Center is a unique institution. Originally sponsored early in 1936 by the Oklahoma chapter of Psi Chi, National Honorary Society in Psychology, to assist students in vocational guidance, it has grown to be an invaluable and indispensable part of the university. Briefly, its services have grown from mere vocational guidance to an attempt to include, in addition, aiding students to better understanding of themselves and their environments, to an attempt to create better personalities, better scholarship, better adjustment to life and its problems. Experience teaches that those able to meet their environment adequately, those who know themselves objectively, usually derive the most from life and put the most into it. The Guidance Center has as its aim the eventual elimination of student problems and shall continue working toward this end. The work of the Guidance Center is under the supervision of the faculty of the Department of Psychology. These men continually aid and encourage those of us who have immediate charge of the work and always stand ready to help in instances demanding more mature judgment. The counsellors are two graduate students whose interests and abilities lie in this field.

The Center is not subsidized, but is entirely self-supporting by virtue of the one dollar charged each student for the services he obtains. This amount covers the cost of the equipment used, and any small surplus is immediately utilized to purchase additional materials thus expanding the services we offer. Provisions are made for students financially unable to afford this charge; it is understood that no students wishing to consult the Guidance Center need hesitate because of lack of funds.

A brief description of our plan will serve to demonstrate that our set-up is not only within the means of any psychology department, but will

show further what can be done where there exists an earnest desire to be of genuine aid to students in their problems.

The student wishing to avail himself of our services is first given an appointment with one of the counsellors who, in the initial interview, seeks, first, to establish a superficial rapport . . . merely an interested and friendly attitude; second, to discover the nature of the problem; third, to suggest that something can be done about it; and last, to assure the student any information he divulges is confidential. He is always given to understand, whatever his problem, that it can be solved only by his continued cooperation. He is told, in the case of personality problems which have, perhaps, been years in building, that time is required to effect adjustment. The student is assured, analogically, that while we can show him the road, he must do his own traveling. A battery of four standardized psychological tests is given the student: the Otis S-A Intelligence Test, the Wrenn Study Habits Inventory, the Strong Vocational Interest Blank, and the Bernreuter Personality Inventory. Other special aptitude tests, personality scales, values tests, etc., are given later if deemed desirable, but everyone applying for guidance must complete the initial battery. These tests are graded and resultant scores carefully studied by the counsellor; a fairly complete objective picture of the client is thereby presented to guide future conferences.

These tests, it must be understood emphatically, are merely diagnostic; they are neither therapeutic nor preventive. Their results are only an index . . . a guide post showing the nature, in general, of work to be done and points to be considered in building toward better fitness for certain vocations and better balanced, better integrated personalities. The scores as a whole received by any person are indicative only of a general direction; the individual answers to pertinent key questions, discussed in future interviews, give further clues to the more specific direction of maladjustments.

Hence in most instances tests merely accomplish in a short time, objectively, what the highly trained counsellor could eventually do in a less objective manner. Since questions used in tests have usually been gleaned from hundreds experimented with, their significance is much greater than the random questioning of many interviews. Then, too, there can be no personal element entering into the making and administering of standardized tests.

Definitely, no one is "typed" by his scores. Ratings indicated by scores on personality tests remain unknown to the client. His scores on other tests are usually given him, particularly if they indicate he is normal or above. For instance, a person who is "sensitive" and easily "hurt" is never told he is emotionally more unstable than 98% of the population should tests so indicate. Rather, he is assured most people are sensitive to some degree in certain situations, and, since he realizes his difficulty, with his cooperation it can largely be overcome. If the student seems extremely unsociable, we do not tactlessly so inform him; he is told, instead, that among his small circle of intimate friends he is usually liked and appreciated for what he is, and we suggest widening his acquaintance-ship. Contrariwise, if an intelligence test indicates a student's I. Q. is 120, he is so informed, and given to understand that, because of his rather high I. Q., he has some responsibilities to society, and he should attempt to know and help and stimulate others less fortunate.

In succeeding interviews the student's problems are discussed. Ordinarily they develop without much prodding. He is encouraged to unburden himself in his own phraseology. No blame or censure attaches to anything in his life. He discusses himself, and knows beforehand he will not be

regarded conceited because he does so. This very opportunity he has to confide in someone he trusts and who tries to understand his motives serves to assist materially toward effecting a better understanding of himself. If the student is interested merely in vocational guidance, and no other problems seem present, the two one-hour interviews usually suffice. However, if rather serious personality problems await solution, and considerable readjustment is desirable, many conferences are held. A few students seeking aid at present will probably continue with two conferences a week until June, and much can be accomplished in this interval.

If you would ask the question . . . and it is a legitimate one, "What, specifically, do the counsellors do in these interviews?" we would almost be forced to answer, "We do not know." The question can be answered generally by stating that we attempted to make the student see himself in relation to his environment. He is taught, if we can make clear the distinction, to *think* about himself rather than to feel about himself . . . to be objective rather than introspective . . . to see things as they really are rather than feel things as he believes they are . . . to consider himself in relation to his surroundings rather than considering his surroundings in relation to himself . . . to effect a higher integration between himself and his environment as a single, functional, dynamic whole.

One single thread seems to run through almost all instances of personality maladjustment; the persons concerned are inclined to be solitary, retiring, withdrawn, living within themselves, usually knowing and trusting few people. Consequently we attempt to guide such students toward increased social contacts. They are advised to attend social functions; to have dates; to join clubs and organizations engaged in extra-curricular activities; to dine with others; to join classmates over the mid-afternoon coffee; in short, to widen their circles of friends in every possible way. That would seem unnecessary advice to a student, but its efficacy is demonstrated by the fact that usually these students desire, above all else, to be regarded normal human beings. They fear, however, they may be "peculiar." Here the Guidance Center enters, and helps them work toward normality. The gratifying thing about the entire guidance program is that they *do* help themselves when they see themselves objectively.

We also attempt to discuss the student's philosophy of life; his goals, interests, avocations, desires, loyalties, what he seeks in friends; how he regards himself; his future plans; why he attends college . . . in short, his whole outlook upon life. It is often noticeable here that those having no set goals; no definite aims; no particular interests, are often maladjusted to a certain degree. Seemingly those with goals and hopes and clean cut wants are far the happier and better integrated group.

Considerable discretion must be used in choosing a person capable of counselling work. He should be fairly well adjusted himself . . . even tempered, but definitely not phlegmatic. He should have both the desire and the ability to help others in their problems; therefore drafting students for guidance work as, possibly, part of their class work, should be avoided. We believe a counsellor should possess a thorough understanding of mental hygiene problems and techniques, plus a wide range of information and interests. It is obvious that he should be intelligent and probably more mature than the average student. He should be prepared and willing to devote much time for actual counselling and additional time for improving his own understanding and ability. He should have to some extent that elusive quality known as empathy . . . the ability to feel himself into another person's life and life situations. He must be able to evaluate, yet never censure or criticize. He must be vitally interested

in his client, but never morbidly curious. He should be self confident and capable of instilling confidence in others. He must have an appreciation of man as an end rather than as a means to an end. He must learn when to talk and when to listen; the better listener he is the greater, probably, will be his influence. He must learn never to betray a confidence. He should have more than a rudimentary knowledge of sex and sex problems. Finally, he must have infinite patience.

There are not, nor can there be, any entirely objective measures of the benefits derived by those who have come to the Psychological Guidance Center seeking solutions to their problems. However, students are coming in increasing numbers (over three hundred have, voluntarily, so far); the deans of men and of women are cooperating whole heartedly; many students who have consulted us introduce friends who, they believe, could profit by our services; and appreciative letters and many informal, unrequested thanks from our clients all lead us to believe that such services are decidedly helpful and will become indispensable to the well equipped schools and colleges of the near future.

If, for a moment, we may call formal education "training the mind," we may well state that, within the limits necessarily ours, the Guidance Center attempts to "train the personality;" to teach those seeking aid better ways of responding to life's situations, making for better, happier, more efficient living, and a richer experience and deeper understanding and appreciation of their environment. This is the goal toward which the University of Oklahoma Psychological Guidance Center aspires.