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College and University Teachers

There have been numerous recent efforts to appraise our future needs for elementary- and secondary-school teachers. Perhaps the White House Conference on Education did more to make widespread the awareness of the critical need for teachers than any other single event [see *Science* 122, 1165 (1955)]. The planners of the White House Conference deliberately avoided discussions of higher education in order to concentrate on elementary- and secondary-school problems. But higher education also faces shortages and has serious financial and recruitment problems. Two recent studies have helped to focus attention on these problems.

The relative decline in the income of college teachers compared with other groups in our society has been demonstrated in *Teaching Salaries Then and Now* (Bulletin No. 1, Fund for the Advancement of Education, New York, October 1955). It is a fair assumption that there must be marked improvement in salaries if college teaching is to attract its necessary proportion of talented college graduates in the future. The recent munificent gift by the Ford Foundation of some \$200 million to private colleges and universities for the improvement of salaries will help substantially.

Our information has been deficient with respect to the present composition of our faculties of higher education, in age, in sex distribution, and in previous experience. The National Education Association has performed an important service by preparing the most extensive survey to date about full-time and new college teachers (*Teacher Supply and Demand in Degree-Granting Institutions, 1954-55*, Research Bulletin 33, No. 4, December 1955). Data from 61,667 faculty members in 673 institutions showed the median age to be 43.1 years. About 44 percent are 45 or older, and many of this age group will be retired by the time the bumper crops of around 4 million children a year born since 1950 reach college.

The percentage of women teachers in higher education was 21.9 percent in 1954-55, but among new teachers the percentage increased slightly to 23.7 percent in 1953-54 and to 24.1 percent in 1954-55. Is it too much to hope that the increasing demand for teachers will lead to a greater acceptance of women on college and university faculties? Such a change in attitude would obviously make possible some reduction in the expected shortages and would represent a better use of intellectual resources.

The NEA study defines a new teacher as "a regular full-time teacher, not having been so engaged the preceding academic year." Only slightly more than half of the new teachers (51.5 percent) came directly from graduate school; 22.2 percent came from some other educational service, mainly elementary- and secondary-school teaching; the rest from business, government service, the military services, and so on.

These studies solve no problems about the future of higher education, but, by laying a groundwork of quantitative information, give a basis for planning comparable to that already developed in engineering, medicine, and elementary- and secondary-school education. It would not be wholesome to divert any large number of talented people from one field to another; the solution would seem rather to lie in a general increase in the proportion of able students who go on to higher education, coupled with whatever adjustments in salary and status are necessary to keep the numbers going into various fields in balance.—G. DuS.