

Draft Caused Drop in Graduate Science Enrollments

The draft caused a pronounced drop in graduate science enrollments in the fall of 1968 and then caused still further attrition during the school year, according to two recent surveys.

The loss of graduate students was not as great as had been predicted by some scientific manpower organizations last year, but it was substantial enough to cause concern in the scientific community. In April 1969 the National Academy of Sciences warned that existing draft rules "alarmingly" reduce the flow of individuals into scientific and technical careers.

Graduate students in their first and second years of study have become prime targets for the draft because of the abolition of most graduate student deferments and because of a policy of drafting the oldest eligible men first. Some graduate deans had predicted that these draft policies would cause a disastrous drop in enrollments for the 1968-69 academic year. Although these dire predictions did not materialize fully, it now seems clear that a drop in enrollments did in fact occur.

Preliminary estimates reported by the U.S. Office of Education in March indicated that first-year male graduate enrollments for the fall of 1968 in nine academic and professional fields surveyed dropped about 5.6 percent—from 77,662 in 1967 to 73,300 in 1968. Psychology dropped 9.2 percent, chemistry 6.4 percent, mathematics 5.6 percent, engineering 1.8 percent, and physics less than 1 percent. Law and history showed the biggest drops—better than 12 percent each—while medicine, which still provides draft deferral, and business showed slight increases.

Female enrollment rose from 10 to 30 percent in the various fields surveyed—a fact which partially supports some of the early predictions that the draft would tend to remove able-bodied males from graduate school, leaving only females, the aged, and a few physically unfit males.

In order to assess the situation at the close of the 1968-69 academic year, the Scientific Manpower Commission, a private nonprofit organization, and three of its constituent societies—namely the American Chemical Society, the American Institute of Physics, and the American Psychological Association—conducted a survey of departments granting the Ph.D. in chemistry, physics, and psychology. The survey sought to determine the number of first- and second-year graduate students who had entered military service since the beginning of the school year or who had

been ordered for induction but had had their induction dates postponed until the end of the term.

Responses from 304 of the 568 departments surveyed indicate that 15.4 percent of the first-year male students and 11.8 percent of the second-year men had either entered service or been ordered for induction prior to June 1969. The impact of the draft differed among the three disciplines surveyed (chemistry was hit harder than physics or psychology) and among individual departments within each discipline. One small department lost 71 percent of its first- and second-year students while other departments lost only 3 or 4 percent.

Many department chairmen complained that the survey did not adequately measure the full loss of graduate students brought about by the draft since it did not count those students who dropped out of school to seek jobs that might qualify for occupational deferment, those who changed from full-time student status to full-time teaching status in hope of gaining occupational deferment, those whose local boards had promised induction notices during the summer, and those who had accepted graduate appointments for next fall but then withdrew because of the draft. Many department heads also noted that they had suffered "severe" losses of graduate students even before the 1968 fall term began, so the losses covered by the survey were in a sense "additional" losses.

The outlook for next academic year—barring a change in the draft laws or the war situation—is bleak, in the eyes of respondents to the survey. Two university chemistry departments reported that graduate acceptances for next fall are down by more than half from the previous year. One chemistry department that is usually coeducational said its entire incoming class for 1969 will consist of females only. Five chemistry departments said they are already short on graduate teaching assistants and have not yet been able to fill their requirements for the coming academic year.

President Nixon recently sent to Congress a proposal for changing the draft laws so as to create a lottery system in which 19-year-olds would be called first. This would take the heat off first- and second-year graduate students. Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) has also proposed that the draft be revised to take younger men first, but thus far there has been no indication that there is really much steam behind the draft revision efforts.

—P.M.B.

Table 1. Male U.S. full-time first- and second-year graduate students enrolled in 304 Ph.D.-granting science departments in the fall of 1968 who have entered service or been ordered for induction by June 1969. The number of departments surveyed and reporting were: chemistry, 173 and 114; physics, 194 and 96; psychology, 201 and 94; total, 568 and 304.

Status	Chemistry						Physics						Psychology						Total					
	En-rolled Fall 1968	Entered service by June 1969		Induction postponed to end of term		En-rolled Fall 1968	Entered service by June 1969		Induction postponed to end of term		En-rolled Fall 1968	Entered service by June 1969		Induction postponed to end of term		En-rolled Fall 1968	Entered service by June 1969		Induction postponed to end of term					
		No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
1st yr	1770	208	11.8	127	7.4	1280	88	6.9	100	7.8	1249	83	6.6	57	4.6	4299	379	8.8	284	6.6				
2nd yr	2054	122	6.0	155	7.6	1191	62	5.2	67	5.6	1161	47	4.0	74	6.4	4406	231	5.2	296	6.6				
Both	3824	330	8.6	282	7.4	2471	150	6.1	167	6.7	2410	130	5.4	131	5.4	8705	610	7.0	580	6.7				