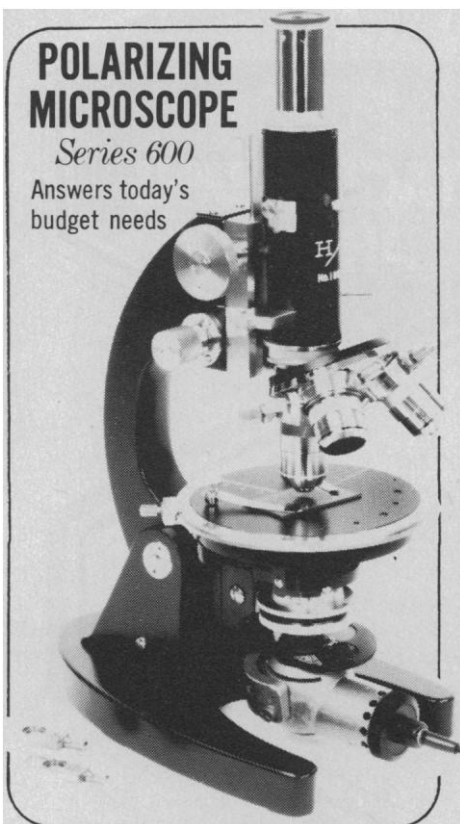


POLARIZING MICROSCOPE

Series 600

Answers today's
budget needs



For education and routine/research applications in chemical microscopy, mineralogy, petrography, crystallography.



**HACKER
INSTRUMENTS
INC.**

Box 657, Fairfield,
New Jersey 07006
(201) 226-8450

Circle No. 107 on Readers' Service Card

Did you miss the AAAS
Annual Meeting in 1976,
1977, 1978 or 1979?

**INSTANT
REPLAY**

**You can make up for lost
opportunities by listening
to the sessions on high-
quality cassette tapes.**

You can share the information
of AAAS meetings with others
or review it yourself.

Write to Eastern Audio and ask
for a complete list of AAAS
tapes and prices.

AAAS Cassettes

c/o Eastern Audio Associates
9505 Berger Road
Columbia, MD 21046

The point of my editorial was that educators are not doing their jobs properly and that the public is fully aware of their shortcomings. In attempting to make this point I cited some examples, two of which precipitated the above comments. Note that neither of the "rebuttals" focuses on my issue; they are, instead, mainly defenses of a college, and a school system and its superintendent. This being the case, the present discussion is somewhat unfortunate since it may tend to divert attention away from the important point of my editorial.

City College President Marshak argues that the entrance standards were not dropped as far as I indicated, and that the exit standards were not lowered at all. I hope the latter is true, but I wonder if it could have been in a place where politics so clearly dictated educational policy. The "open access" standards outlined above by Marshak do not sound too bad but, in fact, the quality of the new entering freshman class was but a scrim of previous ones. The precipitous decline resulted from two causes: (i) some students who did not meet the new requirement were admitted anyway (1) and (ii) the New York high school system *graduates* many illiterate students. The following summary of some of the changes that occurred will give a flavor of what the first few years under the new entrance standard were like.

The English Department had to hire 21 additional full-time faculty to teach basic writing (in fact, 70 percent of the teaching effort of the department had to be directed toward the teaching of fundamental writing), nearly 90 percent of City College's first-year students took some form of remedial instruction (1), and the City University of New York (CUNY) system as a whole had to spend an additional \$30 million on remediation (2). Over the next 6 years, the CUNY budget jumped 55 percent, to a total of \$585 million in 1975, and this increase appears to have been stimulus for the establishment of a new, tougher entrance standard: now an "eighth-grade level in both reading and math" would be required for entrance (2). Many of the better students and faculty left City College. Thus one of the best colleges in the country had been converted into an illusory, surrogate elementary school. Clearly, the 1970 entrance standards were far lower than Marshak admits above; and I suggest it was not I who "defamed" City College and its parent system, it was their Board of Education, the administration, and the others who lacked a sufficient conviction to academic excellence to withstand out-

side political pressures. A very informative and telling account of this era, entitled "How to kill a college" (1), was written by Theodore L. Gross, City College's dean of humanities.

Superintendent Clark's "rebuttal" leads the reader away from my claim; he focuses mainly on the improved student performance in Hawaii. This change is laudable. I am also pleased by the comments in his last paragraph because, unless the press previously misquoted him, his educational philosophy has improved too. The following is a direct quote from a United Press International story entitled "School chief OKs illiterates" (3):

Charles G. Clark, Hawaii's new school superintendent, contends students who cannot read should be awarded high school diplomas anyway.

Clark says a diploma should be based on attendance and not on academic achievement. He says some students "will never learn to read in spite of everything that has been done for them" and they should not be "punished" for their failures.

But all of the above is just a digression from the point of my original editorial. I chose to mention City College's drop in standards, its subsequent ascent to eighth-grade entrance requirements, and Clark's educational philosophy simply because they are blatant contradictions of the ideals of our profession. Actions and attitudes like these are all too common in modern education and are widely reported by the press. The result is a justified disillusionment in us by the public. While touting our accomplishments—as Marshak and Clark do above—may be one way to help return the respect we have lost, it is a far cry from remediation that our profession now requires. And that was the thrust of my original message: Let us return integrity to pedagogy, meritocracy to academe, and thus again produce educated men and women.

JOHN D. PALMER

Department of Zoology,
University of Massachusetts,
Amherst 01003

References

1. T. L. Gross, *Sat. Rev.*, 4 February 1978, p. 12.
2. *Time* 106, 40 (29 December 1975).
3. *Cape Cod Standard-Times*, 28 May 1976.

Errata: In the issue of 13 April, in the News and Comment article, "Low-level radiation: A high-level concern" (p. 155), *Health Physics* was incorrectly referred to as the *Journal of Health Physics*. It was also stated that Oak Ridge Associated Universities runs Oak Ridge National Laboratory. In fact, the laboratory is run by the Union Carbide Corporation. In that same issue, in the Research News article, "Low-level radiation: Just how bad is it?" (p. 160), the name of the *American Journal of Public Health* was transmogrified to the *American Journal of Health Physics* the second time the journal was mentioned.