Vice-Chancellor

Do you think we should [illegible] suggest modification to Prof Gibb of the passages marked on this page and on page 20(a) or are you content for them to remain? They appear under Prof Gibb's name in the printed Report.

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CONFIDENTIAL (Annual Report)

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THE SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES

Prof. Hambly

I believe there should be no reflection on the University in the Report. I believe that we must accept some criticism. Can we make our comments?

JFB 24/3

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Professor C.A. Gibb, O.B.E.

The School of General Studies was much preoccupied throughout 1971 with the need for budgetary replanning, for restructuring development plans and for devising economies. This preoccupation had its basis in two sources of financial pressure. First, rapidly increasing costs, especially of non-academic salaries, were a major cause for concern until the Government gave its decision to make a supplementary grant. Second, the Australian Universities Commission gave evidence of its increasing concern with teaching and research costs per student enrolled as an index of support-level in the School of General Studies as in the State universities. Unfortunately these two pressures were mutually reinforcing and the latter will ~~ensure that~~ place a heavier burden on the staff if the quality of work in the School ~~will be permanently~~ is not to be ~~rather than temporarily~~ impaired. ~~Rather than strive to maintain excellence where it has found it the Australian Universities Commission appears committed to an Australia-wide egalitarianism of mediocrity~~. In the School of General Studies which has been ~~bending every effort~~ striving to provide

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the best possible teaching and research by employing well qualified staff on a full-time basis the primary source of 'savings' must be to follow the State universities ~~down to~~ in the cheaper expedient of greatly increasing the proportion of junior ~~(learner)~~ inexperienced * staff and of part-time teachers who are paid by the university for their teaching service only and who receive no research support from this source. ~~It is important that this School record the fact that~~ These pressures and policies ~~will prohibit its~~ could inhibit the achievement of that quality and status which the Council of the Australian National University has always believed was appropriate to a national university no less in its undergraduate programs than its research schools.

* amendment agreed by Dep. Ch. after hearing Pro. Colls. A.H. opinion

The steady growth of the School of General Studies, which has characterised the past several years since a policy of 'planned growth with rising standards' was adopted, continued into 1971. The total number of all students (including students working for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy) enrolled in the School increased from 4,258 to 4,458 in 1971. In this figure it is interesting to observe that enrolments for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of General Studies

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has now reached one third of the total number pursuing courses for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University. In terms of equivalent full-time students (a measure now widely taken to represent teaching load) the increase was ~~6.8%~~ 7.8% from 1970 to 1971. To some extent this rate of increase in the teaching tasks is the result of a considerable increase in the proportion of students studying full-time in 1971. Whereas 53% of bachelor degrees students had studied full-time in 1970 this proportion was increased to 58% in 1971. Only 29% of new bachelor students in 1971 enrolled to study part-time compared with 45% in 1970 and 55% in 1967.

A number of factors contribute to this changing proportion, but before discussing them it is necessary to be clear that part-time study and indirect or mature-age entry are not synonymous. No part of this change is due to conscious or deliberate discrimination either for school leavers or against the more mature student who may have concluded his formal schooling some years before seeking admission to the University. On the other hand it is undeniable that increasing admission standards do have a differential effect on the admission of those wishing to study part-time since an unduly large proportion of

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them has been only marginally qualified. It is a not unreasonable hypothesis that many part-time students have come from the ranks of those whose school achievements were inadequate to win them support for tertiary study, who have consequently accepted jobs, often in the Commonwealth Public Service, and who have then sought to use the Fees Reimbursement Scheme to pursue their education, while also attempting to adapt to a new job and often to the first experience of living away from home. The records of students who conform to this pattern have been very ~~Certainly there is an identifiable group of young part-~~ poor ~~time students whose records in the University are~~ ~~deplorable,~~ a circumstance that led the Faculty of Economics to resolve in 1971 that in so far as any such students did win admission to the University in future they would not be admitted to the study of economics. On the other hand the mature age entrants to part-time studies have in general performed we But there are other factors which also contribute to the change in the proportion studying full-time. In 1971 more school-leavers from beyond the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales chose to study at the Australian National University and the number choosing to study science which commonly demands full-time enrolment rose by almost 11%. There is some reason to believe that these quite dramatic changes were associated with the new 'early admissions policy' which operated for the

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first time in respect of 1971 admissions. Further comment on this policy is offered below. However, the Faculty of Economics also experienced a marked increase (18%) in enrolments in 1971 and it is much less clear that early admissions affected this figure.

As against these measures of increasing activity in the School the teaching staff increased only from a total of ~~306~~ 311 in 1970 to ~~314~~ 327 in 1971 - a ~~very~~ modest ~~and unsatisfactory 2.6%~~ 5.1 %.

Figures from Statistical Handbook 1971 p 44

It is too early yet to comment in depth on the early admissions policy which was described at length in the 1970 Report. A full evaluation will be undertaken early in 1972. However, some preliminary information is already available: 550 early offers were made; 203 recipients of these offers actually enrolled in the Australian National University in 1971. Subsequent checking has shown that some 85% of recipients of early offers qualified for Commonwealth Scholarship support, and only five failed to achieve the regular admissions standard in the State examinations taken later. In three known cases these failures were due to severe illness rather than to any lack of ability. There is also preliminary evidence

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to suggest that the 203 students who enrolled after receiving early offers have had a very good record in the University first-year examinations though that record has not, of course, been free of failure. Unfortunately despite a ~~great increase in~~ doubling of the number of offers made during 1971 for 1972 admission the numbers of recipients enrolling ~~appears to have~~ increased only ~~16%~~ 25%. It is not yet known whether again there is an effect on faculty choice though it is known that the trend to an increasing ratio of full-time to part-time enrolments has been maintained. With the increase in the number of offers the proportion of recipients qualified for Commonwealth Scholarships has fallen slightly to 82%.

A number of trends noted at some length in the 1970 Report have persisted through 1971. Pass rates continue at an acceptably high level in courses after first year. First-year results whether in arts or science continue to show levels of wastage and examination failure which are so high and so stable as to be a serious cause for concern and one really calling for a study of examination practices and the objectivity of standards. A few examples will suffice and these are chosen from subjects with large enrolments to be representative

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rather than dramatic. Total wastage (i.e. drop-out plus failure) in arts units was 23% in history first-year units, 32% in geography, 29% in philosophy, 20% in pure mathematics and in political science. In the Faculty of Science representative figures for total wastage are physics 45%, chemistry 42%, psychology 36%, zoology 29% and botany 12%. Actual examination failure rates are naturally lower varying from 10% in political science to 23% in geography and from 10% in botany to 28% in zoology. The Dean of the Faculty of Economics has drawn attention to failure rates of 32% in Economics I and 29% in Accounting I but has also shown that after first year the failure rates are reduced to 5 - 7%. Apart from the concern expressed above the deduction is inescapable that first year study in this University at least is still being used as a sorting device with a clear indication that in the view of teacher/examiners there are still many students entering the University who, whether for lack of ability or of motivation, should not continue here. One implication of this is that there is still room to improve the admissions criteria and procedures.

The 1970 Report recorded an increasing interest in programs of study that cut across faculty boundaries

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and suggested that 'the time is probably near at hand when the School of General Studies should reconsider the wisdom of five separate degress of bachelor'. During 1971 a further such program combining studies in science and economics has been approved and the Faculty of Science is calling for a study in 1972 of the desirability of returning to fewer undergraduate degree titles and so to a greater flexibility in the students' choice of programs of study.

The Graduate Degrees Committee described in the 1970 Report has received formal approval. Departments of the School of General Studies now have responsibility for studies for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy through their faculties rather than through research schools of the Institute of Advanced Studies. This is a most significant step ~~in the advancement of the School of General Studies to full university status and represents a beginning~~ continuation in the working out of some of those difficulties which have been inherent in the Australian National University, formed as it was by the combination of two ~~quite~~ such diverse institutions.

The Committee appointed by the Board of the School of General Studies to consider and advise on the total

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academic organisation of the University as it affected the School presented an interim report in mid-1971 for discussion by the Board and more widely in the faculties. The overall reorganisation recommended failed to win approval but discussion revealed that some elements of the program did command support and an enlarged committee will attempt to offer a more acceptable set of proposals in 1972. Until these central issues can be resolved the question of extending student participation in the deliberative councils of the University to membership of the Board of the School remains unanswered.

A committee report recommending a comprehensive scheme for the evaluation of teaching skill and for the development of such skill has also failed to find favour among members of the staff to whom it was widely distributed. There is, however, general agreement in the University that greater consideration must be given in both appointment and promotions procedures to an applicant's skill in teaching, ~~and~~ This seems to imply either that a more attractive way of ~~offering this~~ presenting ~~this necessity~~ such a scheme to the staff will need to be found or the University Council will need to take an unpopular decision.

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All Australian universities have, through the years 1970 and 1971, considered in great depth suggestions that there would be advantages to the community in the adoption of year-round patterns of teaching. Very detailed examination of a variety of proposals for the School of General Studies was made by a special committee established by the Vice-Chancellor, with Professor E.S. Crawcour as its chairman. This committee reported that implied economies and other advantages were largely illusory since both staff and physical plant were already much more fully employed than was usually recognised. However, the committee did suggest that while a full-scale term or semester during the summer lecture recess could not profitably be mounted there may be a case for providing some course work to serve such purposes as bridging the gap between secondary school and university and enabling students to accelerate their progress in certain circumstances. A committee has been appointed to make practicable proposals which would achieve these and other worthwhile objectives.

Discussion with the University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington, continued through 1971 with the object of providing a base in the Australian National University for students of the University of Puget Sound pursuing

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a Junior Semester abroad in the Pacific. Negotiations were greatly advanced ~~one large step~~ when Miss M.G.C. Bouquet, an Assistant Registrar ~~at the Australian National~~ of this University, was able to visit the University of Puget Sound in October. A further major advance which should prepare the way for the arrival of students in September 1973 will occur when Dr R.G. Albertson of the University of Puget Sound visits Canberra in March 1972.

The School records, with great sorrow, the sudden death of its very distinguished professor of Pure Mathematics, Hannah Neumann. At the end of 1971 Professor C.M.H. Clark, F.A.H.A., who had been Head of the Department of History since 1951, relinquished that Headship and was appointed by the University to be Professor of Australian History. Mr W. Milgate, Reader in English, was appointed to a non-established professorship of English in recognition of his outstanding scholarship. Professor G.H. Russell's resignation from the Headship of the Department of English in order to be Professor of English in the University of Melbourne was received with regret. He will be ably replaced by Professor J.P. Hardy at present Professor of English in the University of New England. The decision was taken to substitute for the

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vacant chair of statistics - chairs of both mathematical statistics and econometrics; Professor C.R. Heathcote was appointed to the former and Professor R.D. Terrell to the latter. Professor B.L.C. Johnson, professor of Geography in Monash University, accepted appointment as Head of the Department of Geography late in 1970 and commenced duty in 1971. Two other changes among the senior staff of the School deserve mention here. Professor L.R. Zines succeeded Professor C.M. Williams as Dean of Students and Professor A.N. Hambly has accepted appointment to the Deputy Chairmanship of the Board of the School .