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Mildred B. Erickson  
*Michigan State University*

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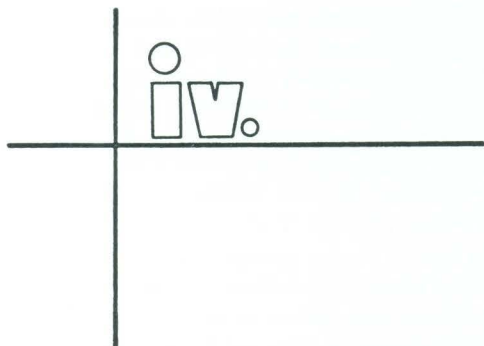
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# Lifelong Education and General and Liberal Studies

BY MILDRED B. ERICKSON

"Let him who would move and convince others,  
be first moved and convinced himself."<sup>1</sup>

Annual meetings of learned groups provide individuals with an opportunity to examine their purposes and ideas and to find challenge, support and renewal among their colleagues. In the October Association for General and Liberal Studies annual meeting we are examining two concepts and their interrelationships—lifelong education and general and liberal studies. The conference itself is an experiment in lifelong, continuing, recurrent education. While neither movement is new, each is in a position for strong revival. The conscientious professor who must face nine to twelve classes each week has long recognized the need for recurrent renewal; now the need is being recognized as existent for everyone.

An article appeared in the *New York Times*, August 22, 1933, reporting proceedings of the Institute of Pacific Relations at Banff, Alberta. Newton D. Baker said then that "two paramount factors must be faced in solving mankind's problems. . . . One is the sound education of youth, and the other, the need for adult education. What is usually defined as education must be continued so that, ultimately, there may be no uneducated men and women. There must be a continuing process of education throughout life."

Some forty years later, we have heard commissions, task forces and

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1. Title quotation from T. L. Cuyler.

individuals relating the need for lifelong education. Rapid changes occurring in economics and money, food, transportation, technology, communications, work, leisure, population, marriage and divorce, health needs, ethics, energy and government have re-emphasized our continuing education needs. Recurrent education can help men and women cope with crises, opportunities and perils; it can refine the individual decision-making process; it can explicate the learning process.

In an uncertain world climate a broad general and liberal education becomes increasingly important, and added specialization augments employment appeal. Great enterprises whether for the individual or society are designed and carried forward by the kind of person who has a vision of what might be and a practical strategy for getting there—"a person with an idea in his head and a monkey wrench in his hand." "To be able to do for oneself as well as to think for oneself, to be a participant in the great ideas that shape human culture and be skilled to function socially, politically and vocationally, this is to be an educated person. . . . Relevance in higher education . . . will be achieved by that academic community which overcomes the split between the intellectual and the practical life of man."<sup>2</sup>

The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that over the decade employment growth "will be fastest in those occupations requiring most education and training."<sup>3</sup> Though this particular prediction covers only a ten year period, there is little doubt that barring catastrophic change it will become increasingly true for the foreseeable future.

As certainly as one talks about general and liberal studies one is asked what is it, what do you mean. It may be appropriate to attempt once again a reply. The Academic Council at Michigan State adopted the following definition of general education in 1972:

"'General Education' is conceived as the essential complement to 'specialized education.' The latter aims primarily to prepare an individual for a particular vocation, profession, or discipline; the former aims primarily to assist his general development as a human being and citizen. General education, properly developed, makes an individual more effective in his vocation, as well as in his personal and civic life.

"The breadth of the general education concept requires a broad gauged and coordinated curriculum for its implementation. Such a curriculum can and should be varied—with significant choices open to each student; but the sum of a student's general education should

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2. George E. LaMore, Jr., "Liberal Arts and Livelihood: A Dual Design for Higher Education," *Perspectives*, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Fall 1973, p. 77.

3. "Job Outlook Seen Brightest for the Highly Trained," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 15, 1974, p. 3.

improve his understanding and appreciation of, and ability to respond articulately to all or most of the following:

1. Methodologies, issues, and prospects in the natural and social sciences.
2. The nature, thrust, and social impact of technology.
3. The landmarks of our cultural heritage.
4. Historical and comparative perspectives on contemporary American civilization.
5. Alternative value systems inherent in religions and philosophies.
6. Personal and social illumination found in literature and the arts.
7. Fundamental facts related to the pressing problems of our times, e.g., overpopulation, war, poverty, pollution, racism, ignorance, alienation and crime.”<sup>4</sup>

Sol M. Linowitz believes that a liberal education “seeks to offer a long look into what has been said, thought, and written in the civilizations of the past and an opportunity to see the workings of different societies in perspective. A liberal education is supposed to give us a feeling for the depth of our roots and a sense of the stuff of which we are made. The right kind of liberal education should create thoughtful and responsible citizens who exercise their obligations with moderation and wisdom. Its essence is, as Plato put it ‘learning to like the right things.’ Or to use William James’ phrase, it ought to lead to a ‘feeling for a good human job anywhere, the admiration of the really admirable, the disesteem of what is cheap and trashy and impermanent.’ ”<sup>5</sup>

Approaching the meaning of general education and liberal education through application of it, Linowitz believes the time has come for *American business and industry to say to our colleges and universities:*

“We need your help even more than you need ours. We are anxious to have young men and women who know how to assume responsibility and leadership. We ask you to give us men and women of breadth and perception who can look beyond their desk or their workbench, who will understand where we have been and where we are going, who will know about the kind of world in which we live and the kind of future we are trying to achieve.

“We want men and women who will be able to communicate with one another and with other people in other places, who will know how to transmit and stimulate ideas, who will know that things human and humane are even more important than the IBM machine, the test tube, or the slide rule.

“We want people who will try to understand what goes on in a

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4. “General Education Defined,” *Michigan State University News-Bulletin*, East Lansing, Michigan, April 11, 1974, p. 5.

5. Sol M. Linowitz, “A Liberal Arts College Isn’t a Railroad,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 26, 1974, p. 12.



man's mind and heart, who can appreciate 'know why' as well as 'know-how.'"

"We want men and women who can see our problems as part of total human experience and who can understand something of what yesterday teaches us about tomorrow. We want and need . . . people who will be able to dream dreams and who will be unafraid to try to make them come true.

"Because such men and women are basic to our very existence, we [business and industry] pledge to you our full support so that you may properly do the job which in your interest as well as ours is required to be done."<sup>6</sup>

Though speaking more broadly about the roles of the University, Archibald Cox also zeroes in on general and liberal education philosophy. Woodrow Wilson said "what we should seek to impart in our colleges is not so much learning itself as *the spirit of learning*." What Wilson meant by the *spirit*, Learned Hand described as the "conservation of the spirit of the pursuit of truth." They believed that "men by free and open inquiry can progress towards understanding. The spirit of learning is the way of freedom and reason, of mutual trust, civility and respect for one another. The spirit of learning is willing to reach conclusions and act upon them until a better hypothesis appears; yet it is a spirit that is not too sure it is right.

"We need the university's example . . . to hold us to a way of life. As the scholar does not know the truth he seeks, as he lacks assurance that there is a truth and knows only that by putting one foot before the other, despite false starts and blind alleys, he makes a little progress, so upon our joint human adventures we do not know the goal, we have no proof there is a goal but can catch glimpses of a bright potential and perhaps can see that by reason, mutual trust and forbearance man can learn to walk a little straighter."<sup>7</sup>

Let us now turn our scrutiny of the role of general and liberal education over and examine the end product—the college graduate. Stephen Withey in *A Degree and What Else?* reported on data compiled by social researchers over a twenty year period on college graduates. As opposed to their less-educated counterparts, college graduates tend to be more satisfied with their jobs; better informed about community, national and world affairs; depend more on printed media; read analytically about political issues, business problems, foreign affairs, science and medicine; vote; run for political office, participate in campaigns and care about political outcomes; plan for the future; are more concerned with aesthetic and cultural values; use greater rationality; organize values and attitudes better; are more open-minded;

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6. Linowitz, *Ibid*, p. 12.

7. Archibald Cox, "The University and Public Life," *Wall Street Journal*, June 6, 1974, p. 4.

more likely to examine issues carefully; less likely to hold traditional stereotypes; less likely to favor discriminatory policies, and more supportive on international involvements.<sup>8</sup>

A study of a representative sample of 1971 college seniors showed that "they felt a need to be prepared to cope with change. Specific knowledge may be less critical than the skills necessary to use information, make judgments and solve problems. Sole emphasis on academic or intellectual learning seems less important to many students than the development of human sympathy, aesthetic awareness and ways to realize and act on ethical principles."<sup>9</sup>

A Syracuse University survey of the reasons that older students enroll for continuing their education found these reasons: desire to know, personal goals, and social goals—in that order.<sup>10</sup>

In Alexander Astin's national survey of college freshmen done for UCLA and the American Council on Education, students were asked to select goals which they considered essential: 69 per cent, said develop a philosophy of life; 64 per cent, help others in difficulty; 63 per cent, be an authority in their field; 56 per cent, raise a family.<sup>11</sup>

The above research supports the need for general and liberal studies as measured by what students of varying ages want and see as important in their lives.

What is the current climate for lifelong education? It is estimated that  $\frac{1}{8}$  of the entire adult population was enrolled in 1972 in some form of adult continuing education.<sup>12</sup> Women and part-time students are the fastest growing segment in higher education. This group created almost a four per cent rise in college rolls last year over 1972-73 enrollments when a decrease in numbers of college students had been expected.<sup>13</sup> Only about 20 per cent of all household heads have had any exposure to college, a figure which may further indicate the extent of need to be met.

"If women attended at the same rate as men, if low-income people could attend at the same rate as high-income people, if attendance rates were as high throughout the country as they are in the leading states, enrollments would probably be increased by at least 6 or 7 million. . . . If persons beyond the usual college age began attending in rapidly

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8. Linda Droege, "College Graduates More Fulfilled, Book Contends," *State News*, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, February 14, 1973, p. 10.

9. Leonard L. Baird, "The Graduates, A Report on the Characteristics and Plans of College Seniors," *Guidepost—American Personnel and Guidance Association Journal*, February 22, 1974, p. 4.

10. *Christian Science Monitor*, April 22, 1974, p. 6.

11. Alexander Astin, "The American Freshman," *Education USA*, Arlington, Virginia, February 11, 1974, p. 129.

12. Jack Magarrell, "Neat Bit of Semantics Seen Masking College Problems," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 28, 1974, p. 6.

13. Gene I. Maeroff, "Women and Part-Time Students Spur 3.9 Per Cent Rise in College Rolls," *New York Times*, January 9, 1973, p. 32.

growing numbers, as they show signs of doing, enrollments would grow even more."<sup>14</sup>

Hardwick and Kazlo in a recent study estimated that 75% of all college students are presently (1974) commuting and that the commuting rate will approach 90% by 1985.<sup>15</sup> This idea is touched upon also by Robert Nisbet in the summer issue of *Change*. He believes that the country's nearly 2500 colleges will become increasingly local and regional in aim and influence, and this will encourage the liberal arts which will be woven into local concerns for such things as environment, health, and the aged.<sup>16</sup>

Lifelong education students coming increasingly to Michigan State University include those who did not have an opportunity (for a variety of reasons) to continue their education when they were younger; those who are caught in jobs they find unfulfilling; those who have enjoyed or are enjoying successful careers but would like more education, degrees, or certification; those who are unemployed and looking for new careers; women who have not worked outside the home but find they must work due to increased costs of living, costs of education for children, separation, divorce, widowhood and a host of other life changes; those who feel that their own promise or potential has not been realized; retirees who may face another fifteen or twenty years of productive life. Indeed, reasons for searching for new stimulation and learning are as many as there are individual seekers. Many are employed and want to fill in great gaps in their lives through broad, general education; others need also new specialization.

The lifelong student faces problems in financing, transportation, home and family, employment, a divided life, no opportunity for reassurance from a peer group, courses and programs dictated by a work and commuting schedule, parking problems, food problems, lack of facilities for commuters, and communication, transfer, registration and orientation difficulties.

Until recently the part-time student was not considered for financial aid. It should be noted, however, that more and more employers are offering tuition reimbursement to their employees.<sup>17</sup> To meet the needs of employed students, educational institutions are offering Week-End College. At C. W. Post Center in Greenvale, New York, the Satur-

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14. "Higher Education's Expansion Outlook Held Almost Unlimited" (quoting Howard L. Bowen), *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 13, 1974, p. 4.

15. Mark W. Hardwick and Martha P. Kazlo, "Designing and Implementing A Computer Services Program. A Model for Change," *Commuter Research Report No. 3-73*, College Park, Maryland, 1974.

16. Robert Nisbet, "The Decline of Academic Nationalism," *Change*, Summer, 1974, passim.

17. "Family Education at Kimberly-Clark," *Business Week*, May 25, 1974, p. 62.



day-Sunday enrollment has increased to 1500 from 100 two years ago.<sup>18</sup>

California State College at Long Beach indicates that 40 per cent of its 31,000 students take their courses between five and ten p.m. College officials believe this will be a model of what institutions generally will do in the future.<sup>19</sup>

Goddard College offers an Adult Degree Program with no prescribed curriculum. Students work with faculty to plan individual courses of study designed to meet the student's needs and future plans. The degree is available to men and women everywhere requiring only two weeks twice yearly on the Goddard campus.<sup>20</sup>

Credit for experience is controversial in the educational world but possibly a big incentive for students. Fordham University which requires 128 credits for a bachelor's degree will grant up to 40 credits for life experience under a carefully controlled system.<sup>21</sup> Educators, generally, need to develop national standards for credit for experience. Universities and colleges should consider granting a major (approximately 45 term credits) for technical degrees from two year colleges.

The University of Maryland increased its number of Spring 1974 *evening* credit courses from 324 to 375 and realized an increase in students of almost 8000 above the fall term 1973.<sup>22</sup>

A number of institutions have moved to change procedures and policies and to open up general and liberal studies degrees to welcome non-traditional students. Yours may be among them. Change, however, in many educational institutions is often as difficult as moving the proverbial graveyard.

Irving Kristol talking to business says it is necessary to create a constituency, to nourish it, and to be responsible to it.<sup>23</sup> How far have we moved? In the words of Daniel Kroll, "Don't Just Talk About It."<sup>24</sup> Bring to the conference your concrete plans for action and convince others.

We must lead a heterogeneous group of students "into perhaps

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18. *National University Extension Association Newsletter*, Washington, D. C., April 26, 1974, p. 3.

19. *National University Extension Association Newsletter*, Washington, D. C., June 21, 1974, p. 4.

20. *Saturday Review/World*, February 9, 1974, p. 29.

21. *National University Extension Association Newsletter*, Washington, D. C., April 26, 1974, p. 3.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Irving Kristol, "The Shareholder Constituency," *Wall Street Journal*, August 14, 1974, p. 4.

24. Daniel A. Kroll, "Don't Just Talk About It," *Perspectives*, Summer, 1973, p. 3.



the most serious and challenging game that man has known: to know himself, his world, and how the two fit together. . . .”<sup>25</sup>



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25. Don Weinshank, "General Education Science For Citizens of an Open Society," *Perspectives*, Spring, 1974, p. 52.