

Harder for collegiates to meet standards

Student reasoning ability lower

Half the nation's college students lack the intellectual reasoning ability to meet course standards the way they were taught just a few years ago, a Texas A&M University study confirmed.

Results of psychological tests given 736 Texas A&M student volunteers were consistent with findings of many nationwide studies that indicate science students are

slightly better prepared mentally than non-science majors, said physicist Dr. Laura Bergmasco Osborne, who administered the tests.

Fifty-three percent of Texas A&M's science students were at a level required of "conventional" courses, compared to 38 percent of the non-science majors, revealed Osborne, a visiting associate professor.

She described conventional classes as those which stress the ability to reason and present answers in a coherent way, standard requirements in most courses until recently, she said.

The study further disclosed that going to college longer is no cure, either. Students over age 22 who had been attending college more than four years did not particularly

benefit from the extra time, Osborne noted.

"The overall results agree with national averages," she said of the Piaget tests that measure a student's ability to solve problems by reasoning.

Even more pessimistic conclusions, said Osborne, are drawn in a new book, "American Higher Education in Decline," written by Texas Commissioner of Higher Education Dr. Kenneth Ashworth.

"The fact that science students scored higher may give us science teachers momentary pleasure, but we must not forget that even among science students, the level was only 50 percent. We live in a society affected by the preformance of all its members," she remarked.

Osborne suggests the modern dearth of classical and humanistic courses such as Latin, Greek and philosophy may work against mental development of non-science students.

Changing the attitudes of teachers and adults who "waste the most precious and formative years of students by dulling their minds in the search for easy popularity and less strenuous work," is the only real answer to the dilemma, she argued.

"It is unfair to the youngsters to cheat them out of the kind of early preparation, starting in grammar school, that will allow them to cope successfully with reality," Osborne said.

She thinks lowering the reasoning level required by conventional col-

Lower living standard predicted for 1980s

Fewer Americans may be able to afford the necessities of life in the next decade because of government regulations — resulting in increased uncertainty and less production.

Maurice said decreased growth of productivity is often used as a definition of recession and could mean a lower standard of living as fewer goods like homes and automobiles are produced.

In the first half of 1979 output per man-hour in the private business sector decreased by an annual rate of 3.3 percent and fell at an annual rate of more than 5 percent in the second quarter, the largest quarterly decline ever recorded by the U.S. Labor Department since it began keeping statistics in 1947.

Useton, director of Texas A&M's Center for Education and Research in Free Enterprise, also blamed the decline on government regulations.

"Some of the regulations are good," Useton said, "but there are many regulations that are taking away more than they give back. More and more people are engaged in doing things that are nonproductive. For example, General Motors alone employs 23,000 people just to fill out government forms, and that has occurred only in the last 10-15 years."

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