

## 2      *The Veteran Period*

Very few of us knew exactly how the impact of the war's end would effect the colleges. I certainly didn't. While the war was on, no one thought of the effect of peace. When it ended it was too early to think of peacetime patterns. One project we went into in 1945 was to cooperate with the Committee for Economic Development. Our whole student body became involved in a community survey group, analyzing the postwar economic trends in eight communities. I believe it was the only such exhaustive study in the country. We carried out the project because of the educational experience it afforded the students. It was an all-inclusive endeavor, offering a splendid opportunity to integrate book work, readings of printed reports, the understanding of communities, and the effects of peace on a wartime economy. To our surprise over nine hundred newspapers in the United States ran major picture studies of our survey—so much so that we were hard put to pay the clipping service fees for the avalanche of publicity.

When the war ended we began to get a trickle of returning veterans but we never envisaged the waves that finally came in. The various aspects of the problem were fully

discussed by the high-school principals in the area. One matter of great concern were the men who had not had a chance to finish high school. For that purpose the Rutherford Evening High School was formed so that students could make up their credits in the shortest possible time. Those veterans who could pass college maturity tests were allowed to take college work on a noncredit basis until they passed state qualifying examinations and received their high-school equivalency certificate. At that point their college credits would be validated. Others took a combination of high school and college courses. The path of cutting through the red tape wasn't always easy, but I must pay particular praise to Dr. Robert H. Morrison and Dr. Heber Ryan of the New Jersey State Department of Education in working out means within the framework of the law.

Before we knew it the greatest wave of educational readjustment known in history engulfed us as it did every other institution in the country. The cause of it all was the G.I. Bill. Even the legislators who propounded the bill never realized the ultimate effect. The Veterans Administration could not have had and did not have any concept of the enormity of the task that confronted it. For our young new college it was, shall we say, like saddling a young wife with a grown family of nine children. Looking back, I have often tried to think of what things we would do differently with the wisdom of hindsight. Surprisingly enough, there are very few things in that category. I believe the main reason was that everything was thought out in terms of community service by the high-school principals. The term "refresher course" was invented somewhere in the hierarchy of national educational leaders. We never knew exactly what was meant. We all knew one thing: we had to get the veterans adjusted as quickly as possible in the field of their choice. Very few people realize the impact all this had on higher education. The old arguments about spending four years in a delightful, general, liberal-arts

atmosphere, without emphasizing any vocational aim, were forgotten. These boys had lost four, five, and six years of their lives. Many of them were married and had children. Getting ready to earn money was most important to them.

Our basic aims received their greatest test. In the catalog, they are stated as follows:

The College proposes to do two things for the student: first, to give a cultural background of general studies that is vital and dynamic and that will help the student to live a full and successful life; second, to give training in some career field so that the student may achieve economic security within a reasonable length of time after graduation.

#### *First Aim: Cultural Background*

A student should have adequate facility in writing and speaking. He should be trained to follow a consistent reading program. For this reason, guidance in reading is given throughout the student's stay in college. This includes the reading of good books, current periodicals, and general and professional reviews.

The cultural background of the student is enriched by the continuous college program of art exhibits, lectures and concerts, and by visits to museums, theaters, symphonies, and the opera.

Knowledge of contemporary society is necessary in a rapidly changing world. This knowledge must go deeper than the mere happenings of the day; it must include a good background of history, economics, international relationship, and geography. All these are included in the social science program followed by every student. Noteworthy is the Dynamic Citizenship class, a group of social science students, which presents in forum, important domestic problems. Following each forum the students poll their families, the college community, and the public at large. The class presents the results of these polls to the state and national legislators. The College has already received for this program a Freedom Award in 1952 and 1953.

To help the student live a full and successful life and solve the persistent problems of daily living is one of the aims of Fairleigh Dickinson. The college program emphasizes the importance of cooperation with members of the family, with fellow students, and with the community. It tries to develop a sensitivity to enduring values and a willingness to act in keeping with them.

#### *Second Aim: Training for a Career*

A good citizen of any community must be a contributing

citizen. Contributions in a variety of fields are made by Fairleigh Dickinson College graduates who have had training for successful careers through carefully planned courses.

The needs of business are considered, and every effort is made to meet those needs through programs in Business Administration which include accounting, advertising, business management, hotel management, retail merchandising, secretarial, and traffic management.

The Engineering and Science courses train students for industry in chemistry, electronics, engineering, industrial management, physics, and textiles.

The medical arts play a vital and ever-increasing role in the life of every community. To train competent technicians in these arts Fairleigh Dickinson College has set up courses for dental hygienists, medical assistants, medical technologists and nurses.

For students wishing to enter the professional life of the community the College offers in its curricula of General Studies majors in economics, elementary education, English and journalism, history, mathematics, psychology, pre-law, pre-medicine (and allied branches), and social service.

Permanent advisory committees of experts in the career fields organize the various curricula and assist the Placement Bureau in helping students achieve the economic security which is one of the aims of the College.

I believe strongly that only by dividing the available time between the two objectives can we make sense in higher education. Any other procedure leads inevitably to hypocrisy and the uttering of unrealistic theories. But I emphasize that each sphere must be given its importance.

We even went to the trouble of stating our objectives in paid advertisements so that veterans would know where we stood. We limited the day group to five hundred. We felt strongly that for a great many veterans, especially if they were married, it made more sense to get a job immediately and pursue their college work in the evening. We even allowed the wives to take one course free in order to give couples a chance to mature intellectually together.

The disruption to our established mode of procedure was enormous. From being practically a girls' college we became

almost a men's college. From being entirely a civilian college, we became heavily a veterans' institution. From the point of view of curricula, we naturally began to swing towards these curricula that emphasized fields for men. Partly for the Committee on Economic Development and partly for the college, I made a survey of some four-hundred industries in the area. I visited about one-quarter of these personally. We felt strongly that we could not disassociate the problems of the college and those of community and home adjustment. We set up our own guidance center and connected with it were guidance leaders from the various communities served by our college. In Rutherford we had an additional committee consisting of leaders in the educational, employment, and spiritual aspects of guidance.

A free testing bureau for veterans was established. We had to do all of these things on our slim resources, while the other colleges had their way paved by government contracts. But that adjustment year of 1945-46 was a nightmare. Our method of financial payments had been on a civilian basis, and very simple: the student paid \$150 at the beginning of each semester. If he needed a civilian loan an arrangement with the local bank was made to effect the loan at reasonable interest quickly and efficiently. Our record system was on that basis. Textbooks and supplies were on a very simple cash basis. Now a complicated system of keeping records had to be evolved. The mere matter of attendance became a major problem, that is, when a veteran either dropped out or completed a course. The term "date of interruption" became a bad dream. Instructors in both day and evening sessions had to make up daily attendance records. Of course, some of them, mostly in the evening, didn't follow through. Sometimes a veteran would drop one course and continue others. Sometimes he would change his class and the instructor, contrary to directions, would not have the change processed through channels. Another costly complication arose out of

the fact that we had made a basic decision to help veterans get started on their education as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, the official certification often took months to reach us, with the result that the college was not paid for the preliminary period. While this was going on, various interpretations of the evolving laws were made. The Veterans' Administration personnel was changing from month to month. Most of the things that we fought for became accepted as official policy. We made and paid for errors as probably all colleges with heavy veteran enrollment did, but we also paid for the errors that were made by the Veterans' Administration.

In order to simplify matters for the veterans, we decided on an overall fee that included tuition, books, and any laboratory or other equipment expenses. At first, this was allowed by the Veterans' Administration, then there was a reversal, and six months later all the bills had to be remade according to the old civilian method. It was a most hellish academic year, complicated by the fact that sometimes veterans would drop out or leave for a job in another city; and, contrary to our civilian practice, we were supposed to charge only for the actual time of instruction.

Many people think that Fairleigh Dickinson got its big break because of the G.I. Bill. This is not so. The actual record shows that we never had in any one year an increase of more than one hundred full-time veterans. We did have more in the evening, taking part-time courses. Our growth was measured modestly, but it was constant through the years. From sixty full-time students when we started in 1942 we went to 1200 in 1953, and that became the top limit in Rutherford, an average growth of about 120 per year. By design we never had any violent, indigestible increase that occurred in many other colleges. Probably because of our consistent community approach and because we were in a populated area, we became by 1950 or so one of the largest colleges in the state. As other communities in the area tackled the problem of

making up high-school credits, the needs for the Rutherford Evening High School subsided and we were glad to be relieved of one responsibility. We found, furthermore, that it was imperative to give more direction to our evening courses, and as early as 1946 we decided that we were going to try to make everything as nearly as possible the same in both the day and evening sessions. This policy has become one of the greatest strengths of the college and soon about eighty percent of the evening students were matriculated regularly for the various curricula.

The Board of Educational Directors, which met monthly, began to knit together, and at first they assumed a number of administrative activities, such as selecting additions to the faculty, passing on applications for admission to the college, and deciding on scholarship grants. In later years, as the college grew, it became increasingly difficult for them to continue to carry out these tasks, which were taken over by the college administrators as is done in other colleges. But the early pattern served us well, since it acted as a part of the articulation between high school and college.

Another group that met regularly was the guidance personnel of the high schools. They were organized as the Regional Guidance Workshop and they were invaluable. They counseled students for college entrance. The college served as an informational center not only for our own courses but for other colleges, and also for industries. But back to the matter of the G.I. Bill. I believe our growth would have been at about the same rate even if there had not been a G.I. Bill, because many veterans would have wanted to continue their education anyway. We were in a growing population area and we had the full force of the educational leaders in the northeastern part of New Jersey behind us. They knew we were sensitive to student and community needs; they knew we were working hard; and they also knew we were getting results.

One of the things we did to help the married veterans to

adjust to civilian life was to make available to them scores of plans for one-family homes and also many books on house building and home purchases. We would take out groups of students and as part of art appreciation show them examples of good and poor design in one-family homes.

As soon as we had graduated two classes we turned our minds to accreditation. Because of building restrictions, we still could not go ahead on a new classroom and laboratory building. Besides, our library needed additional space. But we first applied for and received the right from the state to confer the Associate in Arts degree and then requested an inspection by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Once we were accredited in 1946, we immediately thought in terms of a four-year college. To be truthful, I had had this in my mind from the very beginning, but hadn't even dared to mention it for a number of reasons. First, most colleges in America during the war period had students mostly in the first two years. There were few students left for the third and fourth years. More important, we had little money and it would have been presumptuous for us to think in terms of a senior college.

But once we had been accredited as a two-year college and once we were sure of drawing students, we were emboldened to think ahead. The process was not as difficult as one might think. We had already started to give, especially in the evening, courses beyond the first two years. Moreover, by this time many veterans had expressed themselves as desiring to stay on for a bachelor's degree. How did we go about it? I simply called the faculty together and in an all-day meeting, punctuated by lunch and dinner, I asked them first whether they wanted to have a four-year college, and second what they would include in the upper years. The reply to the first was unanimously in favor. We then proceeded to think in terms of four-year curricula. Before the day was over, a four-year college had been born. We secured the approval of



both the Board of Educational Directors and the Board of Trustees, and finally of the State Department of Education. In September of 1948, we had become Fairleigh Dickinson College. The process was so natural, so smooth-flowing that it was almost imperceptible. All of our faculty were professionally prepared to teach upper-level courses. New faculty, full and part-time, filled in any new needs created.

Having made community and industrial surveys, I realized that one of the best fields for activity for students was building construction. With the help of a friend, Paul Troast, an outstanding civic leader and President of the Mahoney-Troast Construction Company, I set up in the evening a curriculum that included, among other courses, building construction, estimating, and blueprint reading. This curriculum was allowed to die after I retired from the presidency but received an invigorating shot in the arm in 1973, when another friend, Joseph L. Muscarelle, gave \$1,400,000 for a building to house the instructional units of the Joseph L. Muscarelle School of Building Construction.

As soon as building restrictions were lifted and materials for construction became available, we went ahead on a building program in Rutherford. It was at this time that I felt that all students should have the experience of witnessing the planning, bidding, and the construction aspects of a new building. We would start off by having a special exhibit in the library of the plans and specifications for the new building. The opening of the bids was held before the entire student body. The president of the student body would have the honor of opening the bids; another officer would write on a blackboard the name of the bidding contractor and the bid submitted. The contractors and the architect would sit on the stage. As a low bid would be read, there would be applause; a high bid would elicit groans. After all the bids had been opened, the students were invited to ask questions. Why was there such a wide variation in the bids? What guarantee would

there be that the lowest bidder could deliver? (The architect would then explain the necessity for a performance bond.) Why did it take so long to do the job? (The number of days doesn't mean too much, since there is no penalty for not completing on time. If there is a day-by-day penalty, there has to be a compensating bonus for finishing ahead of time.) Bids were all brought in at the last moment. Why wait for the last moment? (Contractors had had long experience with bids being opened surreptitiously in many civic jobs.) And so it went. It was an experience for the students that would stand them in good stead when they might be involved in new buildings either in their town or in their future business. But we went further. Twice during the building stages, we would take students around to observe the progress being made, how the different trades meshed in, how the payments were being made. Students would refer to the plans in the library from time to time and as some of them said, "Each time they became a little less mysterious, a little more comprehensible."

This type of all-pervasive student activity, together with the community surveys and the Dynamic Citizenship program already described, are all good examples of the extra-classroom involvements that add to the educational process. Another example was that of the student participation in the investment of our endowment funds. I requested the trustees to allow the students to decide on the investment of \$100,000 of the college's endowment funds. Weekly those students who were interested would meet to go over the investments. Different experts would be guest lecturers on common stocks, on bonds, on the mechanics of keeping records, on the study of industrial trends. The curious thing is that the student portfolio made out better than that run by the bank's investment department. Mr. Keith Funston, who was the head of the New York Stock Exchange, invited Ed Williams, the chairman of our board, and myself to lunch, and was so interested in what we were doing that he asked for a special

article for the *Stock Exchange* magazine. Years later, when I established the experimental two-year college, I went a step further. I had every student buy at least one share of stock in an American industry so that by studying and observing what happened to a company they could see how it was effected by general economic conditions. Many of them even attended stockholders' meetings whenever they were near enough.

Another area that I felt strongly about was reading. In this case, I brought Dr. Stella Center of the New York University Reading Clinic into the picture as our reading consultant. At that time, we did not have our own reading center, but one of the immediate results of her collaboration was the establishment of such a center. First, she gave a series of lectures on effective reading to the entire student body. Then she took one department after another and gave specific guidance to the students for their courses. She also gave instruction to the faculty by departments. If we think that faculty members worry about student reading, we are deluding ourselves. My guess is that perhaps five or ten percent have a natural inclination to give reading guidance. Mostly it's a matter of giving assignments, reports, and final tests. Some students are natural readers. But even those who follow through on reading assignments can be taught to read faster, more consistently, and more effectively. With the advent of inexpensive paper-bound editions, it becomes more possible for students to have their own copies of books that formerly had to be borrowed from the library. Most students have to be encouraged to make marginal notes, to underline, to make their reading a vivid and pleasurable experience that will last them a lifetime. A college education is primarily a reading education. Lectures, laboratory experiments, clinical experiences, observational trips, motion pictures, the theater, the concert hall, television, all can help to supplement reading. The printed word, however, still holds everything together. The student who manages to flit through college

with minimal reading or with occasional perusing of tidbits is denying himself what I consider the most important aspect of higher education.

I wanted the students to get into good lifetime habits of reading—not reading once a week, or once a month, or once a semester, but reading every day. And, not only for courses but for general background. For this reason, I made arrangements for the *New York Times* to be sold on campus so that students could get into the habit of reading a good daily newspaper. Things happen so fast these days that by the time facts and movements get into book form, new developments make them obsolete; hence the importance of newspapers and special reports. Dr. Center followed up with conferences with individual students who needed individual help and, as was to be expected, uncovered many problem readers due to eye defects, psychological ailments, and home conditions.

Even when I established the school of dentistry, one of the conditions upon which I insisted was that all students take a course in reading during their freshman year. These students all had their bachelor's degree. They were a selective group because we could only accept one out of every twenty-one applicants. And yet there were poor readers or minimal readers in the lot. Good readers could become better readers. The better readers they were, the better students they would be while in school. More important, however, they could keep up better with their professional reading after graduation.