

College in 2000: Is less more?

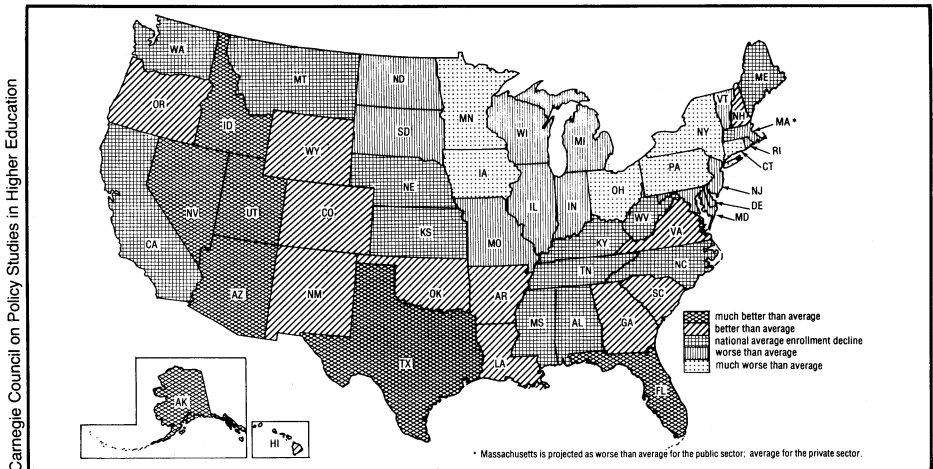
For those who subscribe to the "smaller is better" philosophy, the final two decades of the 20th century might appear to hold the promise of an upswing in the quality of higher education in the United States. Undergraduate enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities will probably decline by 5 to 15 percent between 1980 and 2000, the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education predicts in its final report: *Three Thousand Futures: The Next 20 Years in Higher Education* (Jossey-Bass, Inc.).

The council, headed by Clark Kerr, says that by the year 2000, "there will be more women [enrolled] than men, as many people over 21 as 21 and under, nearly as many part-time as full-time attendees, and one-quarter of all students will be members of minorities. Roughly one-half of the students in the classroom of 2000 A.D. would not have been there if the composition of 1960 had continued. This is a fundamental, almost radical change in higher education."

While the demographics of student populations have shifted drastically from those of 1960, the Carnegie council advocates that the turn of the century should bring "a return to the academic quality level of 1960 in the achievement capacities of college graduates Every institution should have this as a goal." And the council predicts that at least partially because of the expected drop in enrollments, this goal of upgraded quality may be achieved. Students who do attend colleges "will seldom, if ever, have had it so good," according to the report. "They will be recruited more actively, admitted more readily, retained more assiduously, counseled more attentively, graded more considerately, financed more adequately, taught more conscientiously . . . and the curriculum will be more tailored to their tastes."

But the picture has a dark side as well. The enrollment decline — suggested by the census bureau's projected 23 percent decline of 18-to-24-year-olds by 1997 — generally is expected to hit private institutions hardest. "The best universities and liberal arts colleges may become better," says the report, "while those not quite the best may become comparatively worse in the average, precollege caliber of their students."

Of "average or above vulnerability" to the potentially negative impact of enrollment changes will be Ph.D. programs of doctorate-granting universities with relatively modest research activities and universities and colleges with multiple programs below the Ph.D. level. "The most vulnerable category, with enormous variations among individual institutions, includes the less-selective liberal arts colleges — many of which are located in the



Projected state enrollment trends in 1990s relative to national average decline.

East and Midwest — and private, two-year colleges, a declining group for some years," projects the council.

Both the East and Midwest may lose about 10 percent over the next 20 years in their comparative share of the college enrollment, while the South is expected to gain 5 percent and the Southwest and West 10 percent or more. According to the council, "Some institutions in the South and West that are now in the second rank academically will make it into the first rank by the end of the century."

College enrollments will not drop as sharply as the overall decline in "college age" 18-to-24-year-olds, the council says, for several reasons:

- That age group accounts for only about 80 percent of total undergraduate enrollment.
- College participation of the over-22 age group is expected to increase to 50 percent of the total student population in 2000, compared with 30 percent in 1960. "This age group is growing, more of its members have been to college and are therefore inclined toward continued learning," says the report, "and more of those who have not enrolled may do so, either for job advancement or to enhance nonvocational interests."
- Female enrollment is expected to comprise 52 percent of the college population by 2000, and "more participation by non-minority women can be expected."
- The dropout rate for four-year colleges has recently declined from 50 to 40 percent, and the council suggests this trend may continue.
- A higher percentage of black students will be attending colleges and universities over the next 20 years. Even now, among those in the same income range, a higher proportion of blacks than whites attend college, the council notes. Overall, minorities in the 18-to-24 range are expected to account for one-fourth of all college students by 2000, compared with a 4 percent figure in 1960.
- Hispanic and foreign student populations are expected to continue to grow in the next 20 years.

"Problems, even severe problems, lie ahead," says the council. "But there are reasonable solutions to most, if not all of them; it is better to plan to meet the future effectively than just to fear it as a new dark age." □

Agent Orange: A problem of exposure

Medical pathologists identified a high incidence of a particular type of auto-immune antibodies — antibodies formed against the body's own cells — in tests on the blood of Vietnam veterans who claimed direct contact with Agent Orange, a herbicide widely used to defoliate jungle terrain.

Flagging the find as "peculiar," professor M. Mitsuo Yokoyama, under whose guidance the immunological blood tests were conducted last fall at the University of Illinois Medical Center in Chicago, said that "it's very unusual to find such a high incidence of autoimmune antibodies in a group of people, especially when compared to the general population." In tests completed at the center this month, a majority of the 17 veterans studied exhibited antibodies in the liquid portion of their blood that react with "the smooth muscle and nuclear components of their own systems," he said.

Although this is not a major defect in the individuals' immune systems, it is "certainly suspicious," volunteered one researcher hearing of the finding. She said smooth-muscle antibodies are frequently associated with, though are by no means proof of, several chronic liver diseases.

"Our inability to ascertain any long-term problems with the immunity systems of these veterans," say Dean Jabs and Yoshinobu Matsuo, who conducted the tests, "does not mean that they don't exist. We conducted a few tests on a very small group of patients. A much more extensive, large-scale investigation is needed."

In fact, a number of studies hoping to
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