Criticize Education Plan

More than scholarships for students is needed if the nation is to solve its education problem, the experts say. Improved school facilities and larger teaching staffs are needed.

➤ THE ADMINISTRATION'S proposed multi-million dollar scholarship program to entice more students into scientific and engineering careers may do more harm than good.

This is the criticism of many educators and manpower experts.

The proposed program has the potential of worsening an already bad situation, they say.

The major criticism is that scholarships help students but do nothing for the colleges and universities currently in urgent need of dollars.

Student recruitment, they explain, is no longer a major problem. In many instances schools cannot take more students. Engineering enrollments, for example, were at an all-time high in 1957 and many of the nation's top engineering schools now have waiting lists extremely long.

The major problem is overcrowded and understaffed colleges and universities. The problem promises to become worse before it improves. U. S. Commissioner of Education Lawrence G. Derthick recently predicted that college enrollments would more than double in the next ten years.

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"The Administration in its proposed scholarship program has made no provision for helping the colleges and universities to expand their staffs and facilities," Dr. Howard Meyerhoff, executive director of the Scientific Manpower Commission, Washington, said.

"There is no possible way in the foreseeable future for our engineering schools to absorb more students unless they get substantial help."

In the same vein, Dr. Eric A. Walker, vice-chairman of the President's Committee on Scientists and Engineers and president of Pennsylvania State University, said he was at odds with the proposed program for scholarships because it doesn't "help the universities at all."

One of the biggest fears if the flood gates of potential students are opened up is that academic standards will suffer. This might prove more devastating than having a shortage of students.

What is needed in any Federal program, the experts are convinced, is money for colleges and universities that will enable them to enlarge their staffs, build new buildings and facilities.

Perhaps a more serious shortage than students is that of qualified teachers, partially a result of industry having pirated professors and graduate students away from colleges and universities.

Dr. Meyerhoff's Commission, which pointed to the scientific and engineering manpower shortage in pre-sputnik days, said that:

"The major problem is no longer one of student recruitment but of educational quality all along the line and the provision of adequate facilities and faculty for higher education in engineering and science. We see no compelling reason for altering that basic emphasis."

Science News Letter, February 1, 1958

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