

# Guidance And A University Testing Service

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From an idea conceived to assist the Deans of the various divisions at the University of Dayton, a program in guidance and testing has evolved far beyond the original purpose of its founders.

After World War II, the University of Dayton, like hundreds of other universities and colleges, faced the problem of selecting its returning veterans and of assisting them in their choice of courses in line with their interests, abilities, personality, and aptitudes. This problem was intensified by the fact that many of the returning servicemen had been away from academic life for five or more years. In the light of these facts, the Academic Council of the University asked that a Guidance Center be established to centralize testing and guidance procedures for its incoming students from the military service. The first year of its existence was spent, therefore, in working only with the returning veterans. The Administration soon realized the value of such a program and decided that all entering freshmen should be tested and counseled the following year.

The testing and counseling program for the University of Dayton students consists of interviewing each prospective student and getting from him a

full picture of his likes and dislikes, his plans and ambitions. If the counselor thinks a student is academically prepared to enter a particular program, a test battery consistent with his educational objectives is decided upon. After the tests have been administered, the significant scores are discussed and a college program consistent with the test results is planned. Copies of the test results are then channeled to the Dean of Admissions and to the other Deans. Refresher work is required of students who do not meet the minimum requirements in English and mathematics.

## FIELD TESTING SERVICE

Today, the largest branch of the Guidance Center is the Field Testing Service of the University of Dayton. This actually started as the result of the Guidance Center's testing of its own prospective students. The fact that so many entering students required refresher work was of concern to University authorities. Why were so many students having difficulty?

The Inspector General of the Society of Mary (Marianists), who was also deeply concerned with this matter, thought that possibly the answers could be found by investigating the test results of the students of several Marianist secondary schools which constituted a representative sample of entering fresh-

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man at the University of Dayton. It was with this purpose in mind that the Guidance Center first ventured from the campus into a local Marianist high school to test students.

Encouraged by the results at the local schools, the Inspector General of the Marianists requested further testing of his secondary schools in the area surrounding Dayton. It was becoming quite clear that many students, ill-prepared for academic work, were annually entering our university and countless other schools. Their poor performance was due not only to low native ability, but also to other factors as well. It was hoped that poor backgrounds in the basic skills were being discovered soon enough to correct them before the end of the secondary training.

High school principals were pleased with this "work-free" service administered by an unbiased outside agency. It was only a matter of time until all grades in the secondary school were integrated into the program. Inevitably, elementary school principals became interested in the testing program for their eighth grade students. Because high school principals requested mental ability and achievement scores of their applicants, many elementary principals decided to introduce a comparable testing program at their own level. This action, indeed, marked an era of progress for the parochial schools involved.

Classroom teachers, while at first somewhat apprehensive of

a testing program, soon became the program's staunchest advocates. Initially, many felt that the testing program was inaugurated to serve, more or less, as a means of assessing their teaching rather than as a barometer of the classroom activity of the students. This attitude soon disappeared after teacher-education programs were initiated. Many teachers found that these results helped them in planning classroom work. Actually, the strongest point in selling such a testing service to the individual homeroom teacher was the fact that the program required no extra work of him. The University of Dayton Guidance Center, in furnishing all personnel, all materials and supplies, (even including the scratch paper) was making a dreaded task of the past an experience worth undergoing.

### THE TEST BATTERY

While both principals and teachers were rapidly seeing the possibilities in such a testing service, they, of course, inquired about the types of tests available for their particular school. Since it seemed that a follow-up program would be advisable if the student was to profit fully from such a service, the main consideration given to the various tests available was, "Can a continuous picture of student growth be had with this instrument?" Continuity therefore requires that the test battery covers all twelve years of a student's schooling. Since the beginning of its Field Testing Service Program, the Guidance

Center has been using a test battery which provides a comparison of mental ability with achievement, for this, too, is important.

The test of mental ability predicts with reasonable reliability a student's scholastic potential. In addition to a verbal score, the best prediction of academic progress, it provides a non-verbal score which spots the student with verbal deficiency which may stem from inferior reading habits, a culturally impoverished home, or from a home where English is seldom spoken. Verbal deficiency calls for a good reading improvement program. The mental ability test also yields a total, and a grade-placement score which can be translated into a percentile rank and an I.Q. equivalent.

The achievement battery measures three major areas of learning—reading, mathematics, and English. These tests also yield grade-placement scores and percentiles. Students falling considerably below the fiftieth percentile in any of these areas are obviously in need of remedial help before they go on to more advanced work. Whenever possible, achievement tests should be administered annually.

In general, it is desirable that a student's achievement percentile rank either equal or exceed his mental ability percentile rank. The basis for this rule is that mental ability is, to a great extent, innate, and therefore, cannot be much improved by education. Achievement, on

the other hand, is learned and is strictly a function of the student's school experiences. Consequently, the more the student can be induced to function at or beyond his measured level of ability, the better job the school is doing.

In addition to these tests, which in most elementary schools constitute a complete battery, the Guidance Center frequently administers other tests and interest inventories to secondary students during their sophomore and senior years.

### ADMINISTERING THE TESTS

The tests are administered to an entire school in one day through the school's public address system. After having been briefed, the homeroom teacher proctors his class and passes out the needed materials, but it is the examiner in the office who conducts the actual testing program. Each test begins with a sample question or problem which is explained by the examiner over the public address system. The proctor assists the students on this sample item only.

Immediately after the testing program has been completed, the tests are sent to the Scoring Section of the Guidance Center. Electronic machines provide raw scores which are punched on an I.B.M. information card which each student has filled out before the testing session. The data on the I.B.M. card is fed into a large computer housing all possible raw scores, grade placements and percentile

ranks. When the raw scores are aligned with the proper grade placement and percentile rank, the computer prints the correct answer on other cards and the student profile sheet is drawn up from this information.

The school, thus, is furnished with individual profile charts which are of countless value to the school administrator in drawing up class schedules and to the home room instructor in dealing with the individual problems and weaknesses of the students. The teacher finds remedial work much more concrete and practical when he has a definite starting point provided by the grade-placement score.

Each school tested by the Guidance Center is provided

with a full statistical report of its test results which are compared with national norms. A longitudinal study compares a group's year-to-year results. A comparison between classes within a school is also provided. Recommendations are offered to assist the faculty in bettering the school's program.

The Guidance Center today tests in excess of 125,000 students in over 150 elementary and secondary Catholic schools in 16 states. Such a testing service has an unlimited future. That it will grow in scope and magnitude is certain. It is the earnest hope of the Center's founders that they have contributed somewhat to the development of a new era in testing and guidance.

#### ST. FRANCIS GUIDANCE CLINIC

"Guidance in the Catholic Secondary Schools" was the theme of the Guidance Clinic held at St. Francis College, Brooklyn, May 7, 1959. Some of the participants included: (left to right) - Reverend Brother Blaise, O.S.F., Chairman of the Rockville Centre Catholic Guidance Council; Reverend Brother Ralph, C.S.C., Guidance Di-



rector of Holy Cross High School, Flushing, N. Y.; Rev. Sister Jeanne Dolores, O.P., Guidance Director, Queen of the Rosary Academy, Amityville; Rev. Robert J. Haskins, S.J., Guidance Director of Brooklyn Preparatory School; Reverend Sister Martina Marie, S.C.H., Guidance Counselor, Seton Hall H.S., Patchogue, L.I., and Reverend Brother Felician, O.S.F., Chairman of the Brooklyn Catholic Guidance Council. Father Haskins and Sister Martina Marie were discussants on the paper presented on "The Emotional Guidance of the Catholic Adolescent." Sister Jeanne Dolores and Brother Ralph were discussants on the paper presented on "Occupational Guidance in the Catholic High School."