

The Admissions Story at Missouri

Today's fifth graders will be knocking on M.U.'s doors for entrance in 1970. Whether the doors are opened for all and they can go on to become the "Class of '74" is a question now bothering both parents and educators alike. This is true not only in Missouri but throughout the entire United States.

How serious is the situation? While the total number of applicants is up about 10% over last year, the trend toward early application is shown by the following figures:

Completed Applications For Admission Received	Nov. '60 to Mar. '61	Nov. '61 to Mar. '62	Increase Of
Freshman students	1887	2422	30%
Transfer students	247	334	36%
Graduate students	59	139	136%

Housing is the biggest single factor determining whether Missouri's present fifth graders will have a future at their own State University. Future legislatures and their generosity to the University will largely determine the building program—and thus the University's housing and teaching capacity. Residence halls, classrooms and other buildings needed to accommodate Missouri's share of the expected 6,006,600 students who will be attending colleges and universities throughout the nation, have to be planned for and built *before* 1970 to insure that everyone who qualifies academically for a college education can get one. M.U.'s present enrollment of over 17,000 students at Rolla and Columbia is a record—and is heavily taxing existing housing. What the enrollment *capacity* of the University will be in 1970 can only be guessed at . . . and then not too accurately. Housing, however, will definitely be a determining factor on the size of the 1970 freshman class.

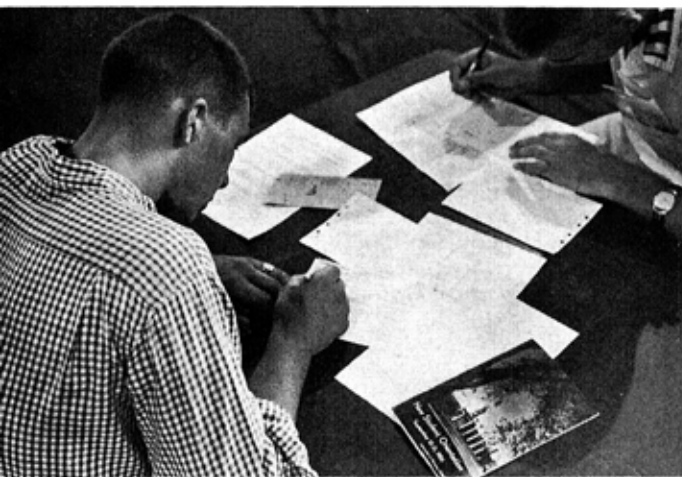
A second factor—the qualifications of the prospective students—will be of utmost importance. With a housing shortage, the marginal student, or prospective drop-out, may not be admitted to the University. Competition will be even keener than it is now . . . and the freshmen of 1970 will have to be better prepared and better qualified for higher education than any previous class in history. The trend has already started and each year there are more and more marginal students (with little chance of succeeding in college) who are not accepted by the university or college of their choice.

If there is a bright side to the picture it is that because of this competition, the University will be able to select its students from a better prepared and better qualified group of candidates for admission. Those who *are* accepted will find that their classmates are from the higher levels of the high schools' graduating classes and will certainly find classwork tougher. As a result, future graduates from the University will enter the world with an even better education than their parents received from M. U.

The University is undergoing changes, many of them necessary to prepare for the "Class of '74." Parents, counselors and educators interested in preparing today's fifth graders for admission to the University should understand these changes and the current trends. Some insight into the problem can be gained by studying the present freshman class and seeing how it differs from previous freshman classes; by looking at the University's admissions policies and seeing how they will change in the future; by studying drop-outs and how they affect the enrollment capacity of the University and by studying the "multiple application" problem.

The trend at the University is definitely toward a better prepared freshman class. In 1960, 37.2% of the freshman class ranked in the top 20% of their high school's graduating class. Twelve years before, in 1948, only 26% were from that group. In 1960 almost 80% (79.8%) were from the top three-fifths of their high school graduating class, whereas in 1948 this group represented only 69%. This, of course, is reflected at the other end of the scale. In 1948, 31% of the freshman class had ranked in the *lowest* two-fifths of their high school graduating class. In 1960, this group was reduced to 20.6%. Thus there was a shift of 10% of the University's freshman class from the lower ranking high school graduates to the higher ranking graduates.

High school rank, still considered the best prediction of college success, is only one of the ways used to judge the quality of freshmen at the University. For a number of reasons (poor study habits, poor student-teacher relationship, problems at home, etc.) a student might possibly rank low in his high school class



but have a high college aptitude. This aptitude is measured through a statewide testing program in the high schools and the results bear out that the University's freshman classes have never been of better quality. In 1960, 48.2% of the freshman class had ranked in the top 20% of these college aptitude tests. In 1948, only 28% were in that group. Only 2.6% of the 1960 freshman class ranked in the lowest 20%; that figure was 15% in 1948.

Thus, a description of a "typical" University freshman boy would go something like this: resident of Missouri, graduate of a Missouri public high school, 18-years-old, non-veteran, unmarried and comes from the top third of his high school class. He would be enrolled in the College of Arts and Science and would be living in a University residence hall. The "typical" freshman girl would be described as about the same, except she would rank in the top 20% of her graduating class and in the top 20% of Missouri high school seniors in the statewide testing program. Thus it becomes apparent that it is extremely important for students considering the University as a place for their higher education to make the finest high school record possible.

Basically, it is the policy of the University to admit into regular standing all Missouri high school graduates with satisfactory records. The definition of "satisfactory" record at present means high school rank above the lowest third of the graduating class and the recommendation of the principal or counselor at the applicant's school. Students ranking in the lowest third *may* be admitted on scholastic probation, providing their test scores indicate the ability to succeed in college. This group must take placement tests before a permit to enroll may be issued. Those with extremely low class rank and low placement scores are required to take still additional tests. They then may be denied admission by the Committee on Entrance, may be required to qualify through summer school, or their entrance may be delayed until the winter session. With more applicants than available living quarters, this lower group has a smaller and smaller chance of entering the University.

The University feels that it has a responsibility to encourage and help the good students enter the University but to discourage the poor ones. For some, it is worse to enter the University and fail than never to enter it at all. From studies over many years of entering freshmen, it is possible to predict the chances of success at the University for almost any applicant. For example, a 30-year study shows that a student ranking in the lowest 20% of his high school class and scoring in the lowest 20% of the statewide college aptitude tests, has odds 33 to 1 *against* his making a "C" or better average at the University. On the other hand, there are odds of 9 to 1 *in favor* of a student ranking in the top 20% of both his high school class and the state-wide test. So while it might be desirable for the University to admit anyone who wanted to come and then let him sink or swim, the problem of limited housing and classroom space arises again. A poor student takes up just as much room as

a good one and when there is limited space, allowing prospective failures to enter the University can prevent the good ones from coming.

Even with the raised entrance standards at the University, the drop-out constitutes a problem. Almost one out of every ten students in the freshman class of 1960 was a probationary student who ranked in the lowest third of his high school graduating class. For the entire freshman year, there was a loss of $\frac{2}{3}$ of these probationary students. Some 285 students thus began a college career at the University but failed to complete it. Nevertheless, they took up space, the instructors' time, and their own and the taxpayers' money. Worst of all, they possibly deprived some other students of the chance for an education at the University of Missouri. In this particular class, 41.2% of the probationary students dropped out during the first semester and 43.2% of those remaining dropped out during the second semester. It can be seen, then, that one of the ways to make room for the college-bound fifth-graders of today will be to admit only those with promise of success. A reduction of those who can enter on "probation" is almost certain.

While the enrollment problem is without doubt serious, there is reason to believe that the figures used to illustrate the problem in national magazines are perhaps exaggerated. One reason for this is the increase in multiple applications.

At M. U. during the past year, there were more than 8,000 completed applications to the University, by high school seniors, transfer students and graduate students. However, only 6,400 followed through with acceptable credentials and were then accepted. But, only 4,800 new students actually enrolled after being accepted. Twenty-five per cent never showed up! Of more than 4,000 students admitted *as freshmen*, only 3,200 enrolled. The reasons for not enrolling range from the fact that Missouri might have been a second choice and that the applicant was accepted elsewhere, to a desire to go to a smaller school. Some might have received scholarships elsewhere. As a group, the tax-supported institutions in Missouri reported that 23.6% of their accepted applicants failed to enroll. Member institutions in the Big Eight Conference said that 20.2% of their accepted applicants did not enroll and the state universities of states bordering Missouri reported that 18.8% of accepted applicants did not complete enrollment. These were applicants during 1959-60 and as the enrollment hysteria continues, the rate of multiple applications rises. These multiple applications make the job of the Admissions Office doubly hard; they make sane planning for housing and teaching facilities almost impossible.

The best insurance for admission to the University is, and will continue to be, a good academic preparation. The University has no "quota" system and accepts students as space permits. Today's fifth graders can best prepare for admission in 1970 by doing the *best* possible work throughout the remainder of their elementary and secondary school programs. Parents, proper counseling and the schools can help them reach that upper plateau.