As student activists grapple realistically with problems of rules and the distribution of power, they are asking for more "authentic" and meaningful interaction with each other and with faculty members. In response to student activism, educational innovations are underway at the University of California at Berkeley and at San Francisco State College. At Berkeley, the Board of Educational Development (BED), created to give encouragement and approval to new programs designed to improve ways of teaching and learning, has approved 9 student-developed courses. Groups of 3 to 6 students meet with a professor each week for "tutorials," or intensive discussion of readings and lecture materials. Other efforts include work-study arrangements, a summer "residence college," interdisciplinary courses, one-course pass-fail options, and independent study. The most important change is official sanction by university mechanisms of continuing educational reform. At San Francisco State, the Experimental College was initiated by students, with faculty and administrative assistance and encouragement, to provide a "counter-environment of freedom" on the campus. Courses range from fairly technical subjects to explorations in understanding self and society. The attitudes of key faculty, students, and administrators are changing because of their involvement with experimental programs at the College. (WM)
INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Educational Innovations in Response to Student Activism: Developments at Berkeley and San Francisco State College

by

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Introduction

While listening to other speakers and participants through the early part of this conference, I have tried to refine my selection of remarks concerning the subject assigned me. Aside from obvious differences between New York and California, I have realized the very great differences in size and mission between many institutions represented here and those of which I am to speak. Berkeley (and, to some extent, San Francisco State) has ranked as a national symbol of so many things, these last years, that one must select carefully which problems to discuss, even in the quite informal and unofficial way that I am asked to speak. Consequently, I plan to give you very briefly an overall impression, then to discuss a kind of "laundry list" of innovations in progress, as some other speakers have done, and following that to discuss what I think are some important implications that apply to all of us.

I was asked to talk about educational innovations that are occurring at two institutions—the University of California, Berkeley, and San Francisco State College—in response to student activism.” First, a really remarkable number of efforts are under way at Berkeley in the area of "educational" reform—leaving aside all changes in rules for student conduct, modes of handling rule violations, and so on. These efforts clearly owe much of their impetus to student “activism,” although some have roots in the period before the Free Speech Movement (FSM) of 1964. None of the innovations being explored is likely, so far as I can see, to cause much change in the basic Berkeley “system.” Second, at San Francisco State College, across the Bay, a variety of experimental programs also are underway, including a truly remarkable Experimental College run entirely by students, but with "official" blessings. As Sam Baskin noted last night, the student group that created this College has attempted assiduously to avoid "confrontation" with the established institution—to work with it and, as one student has said, to "nestle in and under it." But I am afraid it is not quite as simple or benign a situation as Sam’s remarks implied. The Experimental College also is the product of a student revolution and that revolution is, at least momentarily, in a decline.

In summary, then, both of the institutions I will discuss are responding to student activism with efforts at educational innovation, though in somewhat different ways. But neither response is a simple one; there is no magic formula today from the West Coast. Instead, there is some imaginative exploration, some success and some disillusion, and an abundance of familiar problems concerning authority and flexibility, order and freedom, stability and change—old issues, which have been mentioned several times at this conference already. Before returning to those issues, however, let me do my duty by describing some of the changes being explored.

Innovations at Berkeley

Mechanisms of continuous change? Perhaps the most hopeful innovation at Berkeley is not substantively educational at all, but organizational. It is the creation of a faculty Board of Educational Development (BED), which has been authorized by the campus Academic Senate to give encouragement and rapid approval to experimental courses and programs, as exploratory devices for the improvement of teaching and learning. There is here, in other words, an attempt to create a mechanism for introducing continuous experimentation within the system, allowing tryouts in practice of many kinds of new approaches without the cumbersome and costly procedure of approval by the full machinery of faculty curriculum control.1

Along with the BED there was created a new administrative position, that of Assistant Chancellor for Educational Development, with responsibility for encouraging innovative efforts. Importantly, this post is now held by Neil Smelser, an extremely able Professor of Sociology at Berkeley, who has a considerable reputation both among students, as a lucid and helpful teacher, and among his colleagues as an outstanding theorist and researcher. Simply put, Smelser’s approach has been to encourage and to attempt experiments that fit within the American university system substantially as it is. In his words:

"I have emphasized changes that take the considerable resources of the existing university as a point

1The BED was proposed by the Berkeley faculty’s Select Committee on Education in its report entitled Education at Berkeley (University of California Press, March, 1966).
from which to build. I have also emphasized these kinds of changes on which it is clearly feasible to press forward."

But he adds:

"Nevertheless, if these many lines of innovation are pursued with energy, they promise to create an academic context that is much more in harmony with the needs and interests of the current and coming generations of students." (Daily Californian, May 23, 1967, p. 9)

Dr. Smelser's present view is a hopeful one; he sees much more leeway in the existing university system, he says, then he had expected to find when he took his assignment.

Student-initiated courses. A number of courses initiated by students have been approved by BDE for credit, ranging from two to five units per course. Course plans offered for approval are required by the BDE to have at least 5 student members, and to be clearly formulated with references to student needs not met by regular departmental courses. Each must also have the sponsorship of a faculty member who agrees to supervise the course, to assess students' performance in it, and to evaluate the course afterwards for the BDE. Nine such courses were approved by the BDE for credit during 1966-67; 9 others were refused approval, because of "inadequate focus on some intellectual problem, poor organization of the course, or insufficient involvement of a faculty member." ("Report of the Board of Educational Development" to the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate, May 15, 1967, mimeo., pp. 4-6). Courses approved have included such things as a Practicum in Social Research; an honors course in Calculus, conducted "in the manner of a graduate seminar;" and a discussion course on the relationship of Literature and Cataclysm.

An informal committee of the campus student government, called the Committee for Participant Education, has helped to encourage student activity in developing such courses based on student interests. Professor Smelser has indicated he expects a rapid growth in the number of such student-initiated course proposals in the coming year. In that connection, he expects that the BDE will have to change its present procedures for approving student-initiated courses when the volume of applications becomes large, because the present procedures involve much time of Smelser and BDE members in working personally with students on course proposals and arrangements. This is an unhappy omen, I am afraid, because it illustrates a major characteristic of the large university system: once started, new approaches rapidly become routinized, since other than routine procedures demand large amounts of time and effort on the parts of everyone involved. But it is precisely the attempt to routinize new approaches—to do by standardized and impersonal methods what has proved to have some promise in a context of patient, individualized negotiation—that causes much of the difficulty with innovation in the large institution.

.Tutorials. A second innovation at Berkeley is what someone this morning called "a step forward into the past." Tutorials are not new. On the Berkeley campus the term is used for a group of 3 to 6 students, meeting with a professor or a teaching assistant one or more times per week, for intensive discussion of readings and lecture materials. Some 750 Berkeley students were involved in such sessions as part of their regular programs by the winter quarter of 1967, in at least 10 departments ranging from engineering and chemistry to English and sociology. "Tutorial" discussions usually focus more on student discussion of what they have read and heard than do traditional lecture courses, or even the usual "quiz sections" in which teaching assistants answer student questions. Consequently, some rather well known but important things about small-group discussion have been rediscovered in the Berkeley tutorials: Real discussion is hard work for the participants, student and teacher alike. It can stimulate considerable personal involvement and generate fulfilling experiences for those who participate actively. But neither students nor faculty members are prepared by their prior experience for what is demanded of them in such a setting.

It should surprise no one (although it has) that many students find they actually prefer the impersonality of large lecture courses on the Berkeley model, wherein as many as 1800 students face a learned professor in a giant lecture hall, and record for later examination purposes the information he imparts. Such courses are demanding in a special sense, but their distant impersonality frees both student and teacher from the intensity of interpersonal involvement that genuine discussion requires—and I am referring here to involvement with intellectual matters, not the range of what usually are called students' "personal" concerns. Such involvement is simply a more intense, more difficult, and more wearing experience than some persons are willing to undertake regularly. In the past, most students and faculty have not been required to do so.

Be that as it may, tutorials are currently being increased at Berkeley in a very hopeful spirit; my guess is that they are making a major contribution to student's experience in many cases. How far they will be carried it is too soon to tell.

Work-study programs. A variety of work-study arrangements, whereby students combine work experience off campus with courses for credit on campus, is under way at Berkeley. There is little that is unique about these pro-
blems as they change, and to call on a range of faculty problems in which they are interested, but which also race relations. Taught focusses discussion of them on the single problem area of courses in psychology, strengths of the existing, department-oriented university system which is so dominant at Berkeley.

Considerable success in the view of some students and but they suggest that its unorthodox approach was very good for some students, much less so for others. Students and faculty members, and has been renewed for a second 2-year period.

My own impression is that the program grappled with some very basic problems of educational process, and that the attempt has much to recommend it, wholly aside from conventional measures of noncontroversial "success."

Other efforts. There are many other explorations in educational "innovation" at Berkeley that deserve description. I can only mention a few of them here. An Educational Opportunity Program, headed by a special Assistant to the Chancellor, is having some success in helping young Negroes and Mexican-Americans to enter the University. A small "community" of those who have been encouraged through the EOP is now beginning to send members back to the Bay Area high schools to encourage others in turn. On another front, Chancellor Heyns announced, at the recent dedication of a new Newman Center near the campus, that it is planned to have
courses on comparative religion and human values in the Berkeley curriculum soon. Student-faculty “retreats,” involving some 70 persons at a time in a weekend of small-group discussions about university life, have been a feature of the Berkeley campus for a number of years. Other programs, such as organized study abroad, have been operated from the Berkeley campus for almost a decade, and now involve more than 250 undergraduate and graduate students annually. The Academic Senate last year established a one-course pass-fail option. It also directed a committee to explore further last year established a one-course pass-fail option. It also directed a committee to explore further the various ways of putting it into practice. Finally, a faculty committee of Berkeley's Big College of Letters and Science (18,000 undergraduates) has recently produced a report urging the creation of a Division of Interdisciplinary and General Studies, standardizing and reduction of course loads, and revision of lower-division “breadth requirements.” These recommendations have not yet been acted on by the college faculty as a whole.

Summary. This has not been an exhaustive or detailed account of the educational explorations at Berkeley, but it may at least illustrate the type of projects that are under way. The emphasis is on variety, on increasing the options open to undergraduates. Obviously, considerable attention and effort is being spent on innovation. No dramatic change is being made at Berkeley in the system as a whole, although it is possible that a joint Faculty-Student Commission on University Governance, established after last November’s strike, will result in such changes. The most important innovation to date, I believe, is the creation of offical University mechanisms to legitimate continuing educational change, and to seek out ways that the flexibility of the system can be increased. Still, innovation seems to depend to a very great extent on student initiative, and real difficulties hinge upon that fact.

Numbers and Student Response to Innovation

Some of those difficulties are important for understanding the contrast of Berkeley with San Francisco State, which is so often characterized too simply.

The Free Speech Movement at Berkeley was primarily a “political” one, focusing on student conduct rules that forbade on-campus fundraising, recruiting, and advocacy concerning political candidates and issues. Only minor parts of the FSM’s impetus and impact were directed to “educational” changes. Still, it clearly provided the major burst of student “activism” that has so greatly accelerated student efforts toward changes in curriculum and instructional forms. Berkeley has not been without its varied attempts by student groups to create their own educational enterprises, or to help change the University’s regular programs. But these have remained relatively minor, isolated efforts, enriching the environment for some individuals but having little effect on the whole.

For example, a Free University of Berkeley was started by student initiative during 1965, in the aftermath of the FSM. It still exists, offering occasional on-campus forums but mainly offering noncredit courses on radical political ideas, community organization, and such things as experimental film-making—much like several other “free university” groups around the country. The constituency of the FUB has never been large, and its impact on campus life is slight; it has remained an isolated and cloistered group. Recent mimeographed leaflets indicate that it is having some difficulty surviving. I regret this, personally, since I believe that “a hundred flowers should bloom.” However, it is a fact that the FUB is not a major force for innovation at the University of California.

Similarly, the official student government’s “SERF-Board,” a longstanding student-faculty relations group made up of exceedingly well-credentialed and politically moderate—and very intelligent—students, has had only a minimal impact on the campus despite long and patient efforts. They have recently established their own teaching awards program, and have cooperated with faculty’s Committee on Teaching in an attempt at broad scale student evaluation of teaching within an official University context. (The Committee for Participant Education, which I mentioned as helping to promote student-initiated courses, is also formally a part of this group.) Thus their credentials as cooperative, moderate, constructive, and reasonable “good citizens” of the campus community would seem unexceptional. Unfortunately, prominent members of the SERF-Board with whom I talked recently were acutely convinced that they labor under a recurrent handicap in their relations with faculty and administrators: Their ideas, they believe, are typically assumed to lack merit, or to reflect the interests of only a small portion of the student body; thus, they are discounted without a fair hearing. True or not, this impression is widespread, and it has strong consequences for student-faculty relations at Berkeley. Dan McIntosh, the clean-cut and politically moderate President of the student government, suggested one consequence in a year-end interview with the student newspaper. He said his tenure had convinced him that on important issues student advice would rarely be heeded without “pressure” from the sort of public demonstrations for which Berkeley students have become famous. (Daily Californian, June 1, 1967, p. 2)

Some of the difficulties in the situation are illustrated by the recent attempt at an “experimental student evaluation of all undergraduate courses,” which was intended
as a basis for faculty consideration of a permanent system of student evaluations. Amid recriminations about the form of the questionnaire and the timing of the reporting deadline, it was announced that there had been "a disappointing 20 percent return" of course critique forms, not enough to "have made the project worthwhile." The chairman of the faculty Committee on Teaching was quoted as saying that students who had been asking for a chance to influence educational programs had "talked big and performed small." This despite the fact that the 20 percent of Berkeley's 15,000 undergraduates who returned questionnaires averaged 3.5 questionnaires per person, for a total of 10,535 returns in all. This number was still not "representative" of Berkeley student opinion, and was "too low for statistical guidelines" because it involved only one student in five.

My point is not just that the staggering size of large university populations creates massive problems in mustering information that can be considered a "representative" basis for participation in institutional process. That problem is real enough. In addition, I am afraid this example is symbolic of many moralistic assessments made by faculty members and administrators about the "failure" of students to show initiative and to "perform" when "given a chance" for involvement. The possibility that the prevailing institutional practices contribute to this "failure" rarely seems to reach general awareness.

The Experimental College at San Francisco State

Student "activism" at San Francisco State College also has led to a number of innovative attempts, but in a somewhat different way. Students themselves are carrying out several separate programs that involve SFSC students in tutoring and organizing work in the outside community. There is also a flourishing Black Students' Union, concerned mainly with exploring Negro interests and culture. But the best known innovation is the successful Experimental College at San Francisco State, and I gather that it is accurate, as far as it goes. But, just as most things in life are messier when viewed up close, the Experimental College image is—as many persons there would be the first to tell you—a far cry from its reality. Some of the differences are, as many persons there would be the first to tell you, a far cry from its reality. Some of the differences are important ones, I believe, for understanding the relation of educational innovations to student activism today.

A College "in Process"

What seems to be obscured by the accounts one hears of San Francisco State is the fact that the experimental programs there are, like those at Berkeley, products of a revolution, a student-led revolution. By this I mean that the changes have depended to an overwhelming degree on the initiative, perseverance, ideas, political sophistication—and the political "activism"—of students. A really incredible amount of student effort, planning, involvement, and sheer inspiration was put into creating the Ex-
perimental College and, even more importantly, has allowed it to survive for the past year and a half. Some quite outstanding student leadership was available; Jim and Cynthia Nixon are the students who have received the most publicity, probably deservedly, but there were others as well. A student political movement, with Jim Nixon as its successful candidate for student-body president, made the Experimental College and other student-run innovations a major part of its platform. This was of basic importance, because the principal operating support for the Experimental College came from student-fee moneys allocated by this student government. The allocation has been drastically reduced for the coming year, since the “radical” group that Nixon led was replaced in office this spring by a more “conservative” faction.

Moreover, the student leaders at SFSC set out consciously to avoid “confrontation” with the established authorities, but not because they were fully of wholesome trust that institutional officials are simply “reasonable men of good will” (as it was put during the FSM at Berkeley). They were convinced that confrontation would be an ineffective way of trying to achieve their goals. It is my impression that they showed an astounding amount of resourcefulness and understanding of how institutions operate, in getting for the Experimental College the support and approval that it needed among students, faculty, and administrators.

Happily, a climate of receptiveness seems to have prevailed among officials at San Francisco State, to their considerable credit. Key persons encouraged the students in continuing to pursue the educationally unorthodox, such as student-run and even student-taught courses. One official has described this as a spirit of “lebensraum” in which students were able to try their own ideas with few restraints. Some faculty members taught in Experimental College courses, and many worked with students in securing departmental credit for Experimental College study. Important support was supplied by making vacant classrooms available, as well as office space for student experimental programs in a “prefab” hut on the campus.

Despite these facts, the dominant impression one gets of the Experimental College is that of student initiative and enterprise, with faculty and administrative assistance as background. Moreover, the absolute amount of student effort and patience spent in nursing these experimental programs along bears repeated comment. It was effort and patience sustained throughout an intense, wearing year and more of personal learning, of conflicting aims and values, of mistakes and public ridicule, of reorganizing the College’s structure and program, of risks both psychological and political—on a regular basis. The students involved, leaders and others, were and are not settled professionals “doing their jobs,” but people very much “in process,” changing drastically along with the institution they were trying to create. That is what I found most remarkable—and most heartening—about the Experimental College at San Francisco State. It also was true, I gather, of some key faculty and administrators who supplied crucial encouragement for students along the way. These adults also were “in process,” were themselves changed, by their involvement with students in the birth of educational “innovation.”

The Requirements of Innovation

I drew these “messy” and even somewhat negative conclusions not because I am from Berkeley, although I am sure none of us is unaffected by the past several years there. I draw them because I think that in trying to create continuing “innovation,” or even to find presently unorthodox programs that have “creative” potential, we are going to have to face some of these “messy” matters more realistically. Innovation worth the name inherently involves uncertainty, the use of power, risks to strongly held values (e.g., “high standards of scholarship”), and changes in people as well as in institutional forms. Routinization carries, along with its convenience, the danger of killing what was begun by personal initiative and intensive negotiation. But a greater danger is that we will expect to start worthwhile “innovations” without ourselves, as teachers and administrators and researchers, changing or risking very much in the even tenor of our lives. We may be able to create new forms without such risks, as I have suggested, especially in the present climate wherein innovation is fashionable, and while student “activism” still provides us with impetus to do something. But these forms will have little substance or meaning—or survival value, for that matter—unless they involve “process” and some mutual change in the people who create and man them, unless the forms and the process are both relevant to the living needs of those who take part in them at the moment.

The revolutionaries at Berkeley have a saying something like this: “You can only go through a revolution once—for the first time.” It sounds silly, but it’s not. They are saying that you can’t routinize the kind of “inner action” that education should involve, that change necessitates, indeed that living should comprise. When we stop being “in process” about something like education, when we lose what Jacqueline Grennan meant by her reference to the Hawthorne Effect, then something is gone that is central not only to innovation but to education as such. But as we think of ways to foster innovation in our institutions, we cannot, by definition, rely solely on “out-
standing” people, like the student leaders of the FSM at Berkeley and the Experimental College in San Francisco. Our hopeful exhortations of each other—that we learn to live with continual change—must, I think, be mixed not with the pessimism from which Berkeley still suffers, but with a more coolly realistic recognition of the social and political realities in our institutions. Like the student activists, we should recognize that authority may be legitimated power, but it is power nonetheless. We should recognize that intensive human interaction is a lot of work and strain, to which both faculty members and students are frighteningly unaccustomed by the impersonal, arm’s-length relations of our large campuses. Thus we should recognize also that student “participation” in campus governance is no panacea for educational ills. But we should admit that greater student participation can be very important educationally, and that the tension and controversy engendered by current student “activism” is for this era absolutely necessary to the vitality of our intellectual life.

One reason, I believe, is that without student protest we tend to convince ourselves that the status quo in our institutions is supported by consensus, and this is typically untrue. Instead, this is—especially, perhaps, in the big multiversities—a time of what I call institutionalized dissensus. It’s fictional consensus, a substitute for consensus. It’s “senatorial courtesy,” whereby nobody really gets involved in a serious discourse about education or campus affairs, because we no longer know how to have such a discourse with anyone outside our circle of intimates. It’s a lot easier simply to respect the other’s autonomy, his “freedom” as an independent scholar—and freedom is, after all, a lovely thing. It’s easier not to grapple with the ways we must act if our institutional arrangements are to be, not merely constraints upon us, but vehicles for expression of our deepest needs and values.

Interestingly enough, I am convinced that this is what many student activists are asking for today: for more authentic interaction with each other and with faculty members, interaction that is a vehicle of meaning. These student activists are grappling realistically with problems of rules and of the distribution of power, recognizing that rules and power may be both constraints and vehicles. And they are bringing the rest of us face to face with what we should already know.

Thus also for us, as intended innovators at a conference like this: “Laundry lists” of innovations provide useful information; exhortations of each other, to support continual change, have their place. I have tried to supply some of both. But both information and exhortation have their very great limits, and I would second Norman Kurland’s suggestion that we become much less polite, less solemn, and more critical about the realities of the innovations we describe. Unless we face the fact that a revolution is a revolution, then I expect that the Hawthorne Effect will soon be over.