

NEWSLETTER

THE MINNESOTA PLAN FOR THE CONTINUING EDUCATION OF WOMEN

November 1960

So many of you have asked for up-to-date information about the Minnesota Plan for the Continuing Education of Women that we have decided to prepare this newsletter to keep you all abreast of current developments. It will be published at irregular intervals, or as often as we accumulate enough news to make a new "issue" worthwhile.

From Dream to Reality, thanks to the Carnegie Corporation of New York

In May, 1960, the Regents of the University of Minnesota accepted a grant of \$110,000 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York for the first three years of an experimental program of continuing education for women. By September, the program was well under way, with three professional staff members, the promise of adequate office space, equipment ranging from dilapidated to elegant, and a large clientele of women crying for more education.

On the staff are Elizabeth Cless, and Virginia L. Senders, co-directors, and Cornelia D. McCune, counselor. Mrs. Cless, of the General Extension Division, brings to the Plan a special competence in program development, which has already found its expression in two exciting seminars aimed at the intelligent adult woman. In the years to come, she will consult on all phases of the Plan's operation but will be especially concerned with the development of new course offerings to meet the needs of adult women who use the Plan's services. Dr. McCune, as the Plan's counselor, works with both the matriculated undergraduate and graduate students, and the women returning to school from the community. She is well prepared for this role by many years of counseling experience in the University's General College and in the Extension Division. Dr. Senders who is by training and experience an experimental psychologist, serves as the Plan's Coordinator, pulling together loose ends and wrestling with all manner of diverse problems. Her major qualification for the job is a long-standing devotion to the principle of continuing education for women as a solution to the interlocked problems of manpower needs and personal frustration.

The first clients

In the middle of August, a one page announcement of the Plan appeared in an Extension Division Bulletin, which was mailed only to evening class students of the last two years and to members of one women's organization. Within two weeks, 213 women from the community had requested information and application blanks, and since that time many more inquiries have come in. At the latest count 190 completed applications have been returned.

The women who are interested in the services of the Plan are a heterogeneous group. Their ages range from eighteen to sixty-two. Their educational backgrounds range from high school graduation through two masters' degrees plus some work toward the doctorate. Their ambitions are equally varied: -- personal enrichment, vocational upgrading, bachelor's degrees, higher degrees, and career shifts are all fairly frequently

mentioned. Three women want to work for the MD, and at least two want the PhD. Some are single, while one has a husband and seven children.

What are they seeking?

The first announcement told little about the nature of the Plan. Thus, by listening to the applicants, we had the opportunity to learn what they needed, expected, or hoped for. What were their needs and how are we meeting them?

First, a motivational push. Many said that they had long been thinking about going back to school, and the announcement (or later a newspaper article or speech about the Plan) had moved them to action. A second and related need was social support. Many applicants feel that they are very much alone in their search for educational growth. In part, the announcement of the Plan fulfilled this need by suggesting that their problems were common ones. In addition, the staff has held a series of coffee hours, purely social in nature, to give women of similar life patterns a chance to get acquainted with one another.

Counseling is needed by many. Dr. McCune is interviewing applicants individually, testing some, referring others to the appropriate professional schools, helping others to find realistic ways of using their existing skills and acquiring additional education. Group counseling may be started later. A large group of applicants appears to need, not individual counseling, but simply information. Their needs can be met by existing University offerings but they do not know how to use these offerings. For example, some women have the erroneous belief that they can not enroll in the day school except on a full-time basis. To these women we are mailing a specially prepared bulletin on the use of adult education facilities at the University, and they will be invited to orientation meetings to ask questions and learn more.

Several women need financial assistance and had the mistaken hope that we could provide it. This is one need that we are making no attempt to meet at present.

Finally, a sizeable group of women want special educational offerings. They want courses and seminars geared to their age, their maturity, their interests, their time schedules. Two special seminars are meeting some of the educational needs of women who seek primarily, not vocational skills, but a richer understanding of today's world. "New Worlds of Knowledge," taught jointly by many members of the liberal arts faculty, provides an opportunity for study and discussion of selected areas of contemporary scholarship, while "The Arts of Reading" aims to develop skill in thinking, speaking, writing, and reading. This latter seminar is being recorded on film and televised twice weekly over the Educational Television Channel. A total of forty-four women are enrolled in these two seminars, and many more applied for them.

What of the "regular" students?

One of the goals of the Minnesota Plan is to help today's undergraduate and graduate students to foresee and prepare for the several roles that they will play in their later lives. For a single individual woman, such

preparation may involve the choice of a major subject, or even of individual courses, but for the student population as a whole it means more than that. It means changing an intellectual climate, altering attitudes. Such changes are accomplished slowly and indirectly. We are experimenting with different kinds of approaches to the students in an attempt to reach them in a deep and personal way. Thus, informational speeches have been abandoned in favor of discussions built around such questions as "Why are you here? What do you hope to be doing two years after you graduate? Ten years? Twenty years?" The response to these discussions has been most enthusiastic, and seniors have commented that they have never before had a chance to think out these questions under the guidance of a trained person.

A start has been made on orienting faculty advisers to the project, so that they can be of more help to their able women students. Plans for the spring quarter seminar on women's roles are going forward. The seminar will be offered in the Family Studies Center, and will cover such topics as biological and psychological differences between men and women, the legal and economic status of women, the educational needs of women, community activities, parental roles, and occupational choice.

In large measure, however, the success of the undergraduate program will depend upon the atmosphere created by a successful and visible adult program, so it is this latter that continues to receive first attention.

Getting down to cases--

It is when we meet the women who are using our resources that the program seems most real and vital to us. To share with you our personal acquaintance with our clients, we plan to print one or two brief case histories in each issue, as space permits.

Mrs. L.B. aged 43. Husband: secondary school teacher, aged 58. 5 children, ages 5-18. BA in history completed 22 years ago in a small college in another state. Mrs. B's problem is to find an interesting occupation for which she can prepare herself in the next three or four years so that she can supplement the family income (and help put the younger children through college) after her husband's retirement. She had considered library work, but wondered if, after investing three or four years of part time study in obtaining the Master of Library Science degree, she could find employment at the age of 47.

One of Mrs. B's problems is that she can afford neither the time nor the money for a trial period in anything. She and the counselor therefore agreed that she should invest the required \$10 in a battery of aptitude and interest tests. When this is completed, and after she has obtained her college transcript, she will have a second conference. Meanwhile, the counselor is investigating age restrictions in various possible fields of employment. Before Mrs. B. Makes a final decision, the counselor will arrange interviews with specialists in several possible employment fields, the first of which will, of course, be library science.

Mrs. J.R. aged 35. Husband: mechanical engineer aged 38. 3 children ages 7-12. BA in English completed at the University of Minnesota 13 years ago. Mrs. R. states that she has never been bored by the varied and challenging job of homemaking, and she and her husband have both enjoyed every minute of their parenthood. However, during the last few years she has felt the need for some way to combat "the gathering mental rust," some way to study the things she didn't have time for as an undergraduate. She had heard about the special seminars for women and hopes to enroll in one of them next year. Meanwhile, however, she wishes help in planning a program of courses which will be related and integrated rather than "hit-or-miss."

She and the counselor worked out a program which will start with evening courses in political science and anthropology. Mrs. R. was surprised and pleased to learn that she could continue her study in the daytime on a part time basis, and next year will take courses in history and geography, thus building a program around the theme of international relations.

Do you want to know more?

If you would like to continue to receive information about the Minnesota Plan for Women's Continuing Education as it progresses, will you help us to keep our mailing list up-to-date by filling in and returning the blank below? It should be returned to:

WOMEN'S CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM
Temporary South of Mines A
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis 14, Minnesota

Please continue to send me information about the MINNESOTA PLAN FOR WOMEN'S CONTINUING EDUCATION.

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Name		Position	
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