

The College Counseling Service

History and Organization

The College Counseling Service was established in the fall of 1949. It was first located in Stewart Hall on a decentralized basis in order to provide private counseling quarters. In January, 1950, the Service was centralized in temporary building "B" with The Educational Clinic. This arrangement greatly increased the efficiency of the service for several reasons.

First, many aspects of the work of The Educational Clinic and The Counseling Service are interrelated. Centralization provided a basis for efficient communication and referral from one service to the other.

Second, the two services were able to establish an extensive psychological test library and adequate facilities for individual and group test administration immediately adjacent to the interviewing rooms.

Third, the personal-social, educational, and vocational information library became centrally located so each counselor could use it effectively with his counselees.

The Counseling Service is organized as a part of the Bureau of Student Personnel. Any change in policy or procedure must be approved by the Student Personnel Committee.

Two staff members of the psychology department devote approximately one-half time to clinical counseling. Arrangements have been made to utilize the services of a third trained counselor when necessary.

A full time psychometrist is employed in cooperation with the Educational Clinic for test administration and scoring. Secretarial and receptionist assistance is also employed to assist the counselors and the students in any way possible.

The Counseling Service works in close cooperation with the other agencies of the Bureau of Student Personnel. These agencies, in addition to the Educational Clinic, include the Dean of Men, the Dean of Women, The Admissions Office, the Health Service, the Placement Services and the Student Activities Office. The Service also cooperates closely with the faculty and the administration.

Over 400 students have been registered for individual counseling since January, 1950. Some of these cases have required only one to three interviews with a minimum of testing. Others have involved as many as fifty separate interviews. The number of private counseling sessions and the extent of the testing program has been determined by the needs of the individual student. Dealing in numbers alone can be fallacious and misleading. In this instance, however, the number has real meaning as a quantitative indication of the general need for a Counseling Service as a part of a total student personnel program.

More than one-half of the students utilizing the service have been self-referrals. The balance have been referred by the other personnel agencies, the faculty, or other students. All referrals have been on a permissive basis. That is, no student has been required to visit the Counseling Service for assistance.

Objectives and Philosophy

The major objective of the Counseling Service is to implement and extend the other personnel services available to students on an individual basis. This means that all the efforts of the counseling service center upon the student in his efforts to meet his needs, solve his problems, improve his planning and reduce his tensions.

The counselor always keeps certain guiding principles in mind in his contacts with students:

First, behavior is never without cause. There is always a reason, or reasons, for both desirable and undesirable behavior or desirable and undesirable adjustment.

Second, all interviews are confidential. No personal information is released except with the permission of the counselee and in his own best interests.

Third, the inherent worth and the integrity of each individual is always kept in mind.

Fourth, freedom and responsibility for making choices and decisions rests with the counselee at all times.

The objectives and philosophy of the Counseling Service are illustrated and summarized in the following fictionalized incidents based on actual cases. The various students are presenting typical situations wherein counseling is needed. After each group of presentations the situations are evaluated by the counselor. The total picture is then summarized by a series of conclusions.¹

Case 1 . . .

"I'm all upset. When I'm here at college I worry about my folks and wonder if they are all right. Here at T. C. I feel as though I ought to be home, and I miss the folks. It gets so bad sometimes that I can't sleep and I can't pay attention in class. I know I don't eat the way I should, but I just don't have any appetite. Then when I go home, the folks get on my nerves after I have been there an hour or two and I wonder why I bothered to come home at all. Mother and Dad treat me like a kid and that makes me awfully mad. I fight with my kid sister all the time even though I think she's tops,

¹ These cases with counselor comments and conclusions were prepared and first presented as a radio script by the author in collaboration with Dr. M. E. Van Nostrand of the Counseling Service.

and I resent everything Mother and Dad say even though most of the time I know they're right. I know I shouldn't feel this way, but I can't seem to do anything about it."

Case 2 . . .

"I'm worried about the way I get along with people. I get along with the other fellows in good shape most of the time, but I just don't make the grade at all with the girls. Whenever I try to talk to a girl, she seems friendly enough, but I get self-conscious and can't think of anything to say. Just the thought of asking a girl for a date scares me half to death, but I'd really like to go out. I know I'm losing out on a lot of the social activities and losing friends. What do you suppose is the matter with me?"

Counselor Comment 1

Here we have two cases where the students have reported rather different situations. It is the problem of the counselor to see back of the superficial difficulties which really are symptoms of more basic, underlying difficulties. The girl who finds difficulty in adjusting to her parents and yet, at the same time, feels drawn to them, is facing a very similar problem to the young man who finds difficulty making good social adjustments with girls his own age, but yet feels drawn normally to them. The task of a counselor is to help young people like this, first to discover the basic causes for these feelings, and then to help them find satisfying and acceptable ways of resolving their conflicts.

It must be emphasized that the counselor is not concerned with giving free advice. The task of every counselor and of the College Counseling Service is to help these young people to discover for themselves and with their own abilities, the methods of making mature personal, social, vocational, and educational adjustments.

The next group of students will present a different type of situation which would bring them to the College Counseling Service.

Case 3 . . .

"I have been doing all right in some of my classes, but some of the others haven't been going well. Science and mathematics are o.k., but I'm making low grades in English, and I have trouble keeping up with the reading assignment in psychology. I'm beginning to wonder if I should be in college or just what the trouble is, and what I should do if I drop out."

Case 4 . . .

"This is my fifth quarter here at T. C. I have been taking the general courses in English, science, humanities and social studies, and I have been doing all right - - Mostly B's and C's and a couple of A's. Besides that, I'm in the choral club and I'm taking voice lessons. I'm interested in music very

much, but I don't know what my chances are for making music my life's work. If I don't go into music I don't know just what I want to do, what I can do, or what I should do. I surely need some help in making up my mind."

Case 5 . . .

"One of my instructors mentioned the tests that we all had to take when we came to college last fall. He said all of us should know what we had done on these tests so we would have a better understanding of our strengths and weaknesses. After class I asked him where I could find out about mine and he referred me over to you."

Counselor Comment 2

The three students whom you have just heard have presented typical educational and vocational problems which often confront college students. Some students do not have the ability to do college work successfully. Others have the ability to do some types of college work successfully, whereas they would be unsuccessful in other areas.

Some students are faced with indecision because they lack adequate information concerning their strong points and their weak points, and their interests, or their likes and dislikes. Still others face these problems because of the fact that they do not have sufficient information about different types of jobs or about the educational requirements for these jobs. Through counseling, supplemented by testing, the College Counseling Service can assist the student in gaining a more adequate appraisal of himself and more accurate information of any sort. If the student has a clear picture of himself and the necessary information, he is thus placed in a position to make wise decisions and adequate adjustment educationally or vocationally.

The next student who is talking with the counselor presents a more complex problem because of her own emotional involvements.

Case 6 . . .

"My advisor suggested that I come in to see you because of the way my work is going. I'm a second quarter junior, majoring in business administration. I had about a B average for my first two years here in college, but I made a D, two C's and a B the last quarter. I'm doing no better in my present courses, and may even be doing poorer. I've been feeling terrible but I can't find out what is the matter. I have a dull headache half the time and my stomach is upset nearly all the time. I had a complete physical examination from our family physician last month and he didn't find a thing wrong with me. He said I seemed to be worrying too much, and maybe I was working too hard. My appetite has been a little better and I am sleeping some better because I take the medicine regularly that he prescribed to help me in these respects. I've been going to the Health Service about once a week, too. My temperature and pulse are always normal, but I still have the headaches and the stomach trouble.

My advisor told me that my high school record and the results of the tests I took when I entered the college indicate that I have the ability to do good work in college. Since I did o.k. the first two years, my ability is apparently high enough even though I'm making poor grades now. It must be because I feel so bad, and yet they tell me that there is nothing wrong with me physically. The whole thing has me so mixed up that I'd be tempted to drop out of school if I thought that would help."

Counselor Comment 3

In this situation, the difficulty is one of emotional adjustment rather than adjustment to scholastic problems in and of themselves. There are things that are troubling this student, and she needs help in order to discover what her real difficulties are. As we listened to the recital of the difficulties that she faces and the situations which disturb her, we cannot escape the feeling that here is a girl who has basic disturbances of which she is not aware. She is aware of some of the symptoms of her disturbances, but she does not recognize many of them. She has tried to deal with the problem in terms of those symptoms that she recognizes rather than in terms of the basic difficulties that are hers.

In helping a student like this one, the counselor must proceed slowly and carefully, winning first of all the confidence of the student, then helping the student to see each of the difficulties as it comes to light. Each new step helps the student to gain new insights into the situation. As one after another these insights come and the problems and conflicts resolve themselves, the student gains greater surety, and one by one the various symptoms disappear as she is helped.

In this situation, we cannot expect to achieve 100 per cent adjustment. As a matter of fact, no one ever is completely adjusted. But in this instance, there are many indications of insights that are already there, and it is expected that as the student and the counselor work together, that new insights will come, new methods of handling situations will be learned, and gains will be made so that this person will be much better adjusted than before coming to the counseling service.

This student is dealing with a problem which probably stems largely from difficulties within herself. The next student, however, is involved in a situation in which people and forces outside himself are largely responsible for his problem.

Case 7 . . .

"My grades last quarter were pretty low. I feel terrible to have done so poorly, but my Dad feels even worse, I think. He wants me to be an engineer, so I enrolled in the pre-engineering course here at school. My Dad is a good mechanic and he has his own garage. He's paying all my way if I'll be an engineer. It makes me feel worse because he is so good to help me when it is a little hard for him and mother with my three other brothers

and sister at home. I really tried last quarter and I'm trying now, but I have a tough time in both chemistry and algebra. The teachers helped me a lot outside of class, even, but after I study math, especially, for fifteen or twenty minutes, I just can't keep my mind on it. That's funny, too, because I spent hours on the model house for art appreciation and loved every minute of it. I liked my English course, too. There's really nothing I'd rather do than pick up a good book or a photography magazine and read. I got my best grades in the art and English courses, but what good will they be to an engineer?"

Case 8 . . .

"The housemother thought I should come over and talk to you but I can't see why."

Question - "Tell me a little about yourself. How are you getting along here in school?"

Reply - "That's just what I mean. I'm getting along fine. I made straight A's last quarter and I think I will this quarter too. (pause) Of course I should, I study every night and even weekends when I go home I do special projects in the library. (pause) I like to study, but sometimes I can't help but feel that I'm missing something. When the other girls go out on dates I get to feeling sorry for myself, and yet they don't get anywhere near the grades that I do. The funny thing is that it doesn't bother them either."

Question - "What clubs do you belong to or what activities have you taken part in lately?"

Reply - "Oh, I'm not in anything like that. (pause) Do you suppose that's why the housemother wanted me to see you?"

Counselor Comment 4

The girl whom you have just heard is compensating for inadequate adjustment personally and socially through over-concentration on a perfect grade record. She is somewhat aware of her social and personal inadequacies, but has not faced them realistically.

She needs assistance in finding a better balance between her academic activities and those social activities which are basic to desirable adjustment. The counselor can render this assistance by talking through the problem with her so that she gains insight into her needs and learns to evaluate herself and her activities in a more realistic manner.

The boy who discussed his difficulties in the pre-engineering course needs assistance in resolving a problem which stems from parental desire that he achieve a certain objective. Often the goals a parent sets for a student are based on the parent's desires only, and are unsound if not in line with the student's abilities and interests.

His problem is made more difficult because of his natural loyalty and devotion to his family and his desire to please his father.

He needs assistance in gaining a proper evaluation of himself and his relationship with his family. If he achieves this goal through counseling, he can probably talk the matter through with his father and decide on another course of training which will be in line with his abilities and interests.

In some instances where the student is unable to present his case in such a manner as to obtain the cooperation of the parents, the counselor can be of assistance through conferences with the parents.

These two students, and those whom you have heard before them, have highlighted some of the problems which may arise rather frequently as normal young people grow towards maturity. In other words, these are some of the dilemmas that may confront any normal person, and usually such problems will respond quite readily to counseling. There are infrequent instances, however, when the problem is of a more serious and severe nature. The final student whom you will hear exemplifies such a problem.

Case 9 . . .

"The strangest thing has been happening to me lately and I'm becoming more and more disturbed about it. I've reached the point now where I've just got to talk to someone. Every once in a while for the last two or three weeks, I've noticed that my right hand gets numb. It doesn't have any feeling in it at all - - It scares me."

Counselor - "Tell me about the last time you noticed this numbness."

Client - "Well, the last time was just yesterday when I had to take a history exam. It was a subjective test, and there was a lot of writing. I was frightened about the test even before I went to class. I got through the first question all right, but while I was trying to think of what to write for the next one, I noticed that I couldn't feel the pen in my hand at all. It frightened me so that I just got up and left the room. I don't know what the teacher thought, but I went over to my room in the dorm and I was so scared I just shook. I couldn't feel anything in that hand for hours. And then just as quickly as the numbness had come, it went away. I don't know where to turn to, or what to do."

Counselor Comment 5

This last situation is one which indicates the very probable necessity for referral to other more specialized sources of help. It is a part of the training and the skill of any person working as a counselor to understand his own limitations as well as his own capabilities.

In the situation which we have just heard, there are indications that psychiatric help is needed, and that a much longer period of time may be required before this situation can be cleared up. Since the student has

sought help early, however, and since her condition is not too advanced, there is every reason to expect that with adequate psychiatric care she will make a relatively speedy recovery and will be able to make good adjustment in a normal, wholesome, adult manner, to the problems and difficulties that she faces.

Now that we have presented those typical situations in which college students need assistance and we have commented briefly about them, may we summarize by emphasizing with a few short statements the guiding principles on which we work:

Conclusion

1. All counseling is essentially a person-to-person relationship. This is why the private interview is always used.
2. Counseling aims to give the person independence and strength. Advice-giving may make him dependent and weak.
3. The counselor does not solve problems or make decisions for the individual. He helps him to solve his own problems and make his own decisions.
4. The skilled counselor uses many tools and techniques in assisting the person. Among these are psychological tests, vocational books and pamphlets, and educational informational material.
5. The counselor must have a thorough knowledge of the skills and services of other persons or agencies to whom the student can be referred for special help.
6. All information given by the student is always held in strictest confidence by the counselor.
7. Counseling is non-judgmental. By this we mean that the counselor never acts in the capacity of judge upon the behavior of the person. He only seeks to understand **why** the person does what he does, without either condemnation or censure.
8. The Counseling Service at a Teachers College is double important because it helps the prospective teacher to achieve personal maturity which will be reflected in his relationships with children throughout his teaching career. This is the cornerstone of mental health in a community.
9. And finally, the Counseling Service deals with normal people who are wrestling with problems that cannot be solved by simple self-analysis. The major emphasis of counseling is to keep normal people normal.