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## THE JUNIOR COLLEGE - A HUMANIZING INSTITUTION

Terry O'Banion

In 1964 Mario Savio launched the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in a dramatic outburst of pent-up student frustrations over the quality of their educational experience. He described the educational experience as a machine designed to grind the bones of students to make societal bread. He said:

There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart that you can't take part; you can't even tacitly take part, and you've got to put your bodies on the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all apparatus and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machines will be prevented from working at all. (1)

The student revolution has continued for six years, but the educational machine has not changed a great deal. In March of 1970 a group of concerned students attended the annual convention of the American College Personnel Association (an association especially committed to student development) in St. Louis, Missouri, and requested that the Association address itself to a number of relevant issues of concern to students. In A Statement of Principle the students in 1970 echoed Mario Savio's description of education in 1964:

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Dr. Terry O'Banion was the first Dean of Students at Santa Fe Junior College. He has been an Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Illinois since 1967, and has served as a consultant to colleges in 22 states and Canada.

The new "multiversity" is a factory that turns out scientists, technicians, and managers to meet the demands of an increasingly cybernated production system...the university has prostituted itself - it has become a service station to the military and the large corporations, where students are supposed to plug in, receive some high-octane fuel (knowledge), and drive off, without a map of life, to fit into a slot in some bureaucratic arrangement. (2)

These two statements described education as some students see it in the university, but it is a description that fits the junior college just as well. The junior college is an American social invention and represents the ingenuity that Americans invest in mechanical contrivances. The junior college is based on a production model of education and the plan is for each community to have its own hometown factory. From the factory bright, new, young technicians are purchased for business and industry. Transfer students come off the assembly line well-packaged for the university. For those who are not trained as technicians or who have not prepared for the university, the junior college becomes a receiving station, holding the surplus merchandise until it can be mysteriously distributed to other social alchemists for their experimentation. The production model offers repair services for a sizable adult population through a continuing education program - tighten a loose part, repair a broken piece, install a new component, add a little cultural polish, and the old girl is ready to be plugged back in for another five years.

The junior college has become one of the most useful instruments of our production-oriented society. Indeed, many junior colleges even take the names of successful producers, Corning Community College in New York for Corning Glass, Kellogg Community College in Michigan for Kellogg cereals, and the most obvious of all, Henry Ford Community College in

Michigan. The junior college is the Horatio Alger of higher education, our own homegrown darling. Feed him well and he will turn out bigger and better products. One junior college president said this to me very clearly in a recent conversation, "We have to gear our products to what the university will buy."

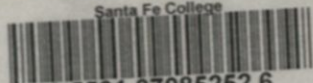
The propertied gentlemen who make decisions in the U. S. Congress have also come to recognize the great value of the junior college in terms of our production-oriented society. Federal support for junior colleges has increased significantly during the past five years, and a national junior college bill insuring two years of free higher education for everyone is just a matter of time. The mission of that education is well expressed in a March, 1970 statement by President Nixon:

Two-year community colleges and technical institutes hold great promise for giving the kind of education which leads to good jobs and also for filling national shortages of critical skill occupations. Costs for these schools are relatively low, especially since there are few residential construction needs. A dollar spent on community colleges is probably spent as effectively as anywhere in the educational world. (3)

And so there you have it straight from Poor Richard's Almanac: a penny saved is a penny earned, the production of junior college students is cheap and, therefore, good.

The junior college is primarily a factory, a production model of education in which students are turned out to fit industry or the university or are stored away until they simply evaporate. *In my opinion the major issue confronting the junior college is whether or not we will continue to support the junior college as a model of production or whether we will choose to redirect the junior college as an educational institution that is responsive to some other kinds of human needs.* I think there

Santa Fe College



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A Day At

# Santa Fe

*Joseph P. Cosand · John W. Dunn  
Edmund J. Gleazer, Jr. · W. Harold Grant  
B. Lamar Johnson · S. V. Martorana  
Jane E. Matson · Leland L. Medsker  
Ferry O'Banion · Bill J. Priest  
Max R. Raines · Richard C. Richardson, Jr.  
James L. Wallentarger*

*with a foreword by*

*Joseph W. Fordyce*

is no doubt but that the junior college can continue in great favor as a production model; even if it responds to other human needs it will probably still be necessary for the junior college to retain some aspects of the production model. But if the junior college continues primarily as a production model then it will continue, along with most other levels and kinds of education, to function in an anti-life, dehumanizing way with students and with faculty and staff.

The production model dehumanizes, takes away from the essential human quality of what it means to be a person. As Harvey Cox, the eminent theologian, says "...the tight, bureaucratic and instrumental society - the only model we've known since the industrial revolution - renders us incapable of experiencing the non-rational dimensions of existence. The absurd, the inspiring, the uncanny, the awesome, the terrifying, the ecstatic - none of these fits into a production - and efficiency-oriented society." (4, 45-67) The production model requires conformity to operate efficiently; straight rows, fifty minute hours, a five-point grading scale, rectangular shaped classrooms; education is square, straight, timed, and stiff. A college student describes this kind of education in a poem he has entitled *About School*:

*About School*

He always wanted to say things. But no one understood.  
He always wanted to explain things. But no one cared.  
So he drew.

Sometimes he would just draw and it wasn't anything. He wanted to carve it in stone or write it in the sky.  
He would lie out on the grass and look up in the sky and it would be only him and the sky and things inside him that needed saying.

And it was after that, that he drew the picture. It was a beautiful picture. He kept it under the pillow and would let no one see it. And he would look at it every night and think about it. And when it was dark, and his eyes were closed, he could still see it. And it was all of him. And he loved it. When he started school he brought it with him. Not to show anyone, but just to have with him like a friend.

It was funny about school. He sat in a square, brown desk like all the other square, brown desks and he thought it should be red. And his room was a square, brown room. Like all the other rooms. And it was tight and close. And stiff.

He hated to hold the pencil and the chalk, with his arm stiff and his feet flat on the floor, stiff, with the teacher watching and watching.

And then he had to write numbers. And they weren't anything. They were worse than the letters that could be something if you put them together. And the numbers were tight and square and he hated the whole thing.

The teacher came and spoke to him. She told him to wear a tie like all the other boys. He said he didn't like them and she said it didn't matter.

After that they drew. And he drew all yellow and it was the way he felt about morning. And it was beautiful.

The teacher came and smiled at him. "What's this?" she said. "Why don't you draw something like Ken's drawing? Isn't that beautiful?" It was all questions.

After that his mother bought him a tie and he always drew airplanes and rocket ships like everyone else. And he threw the old picture away.

And when he lay out alone looking at the sky, it was big and blue and all of everything, but *he* wasn't anymore.

He was square inside and brown, and his hands were stiff, and he was like everyone else. And the thing inside him that needed saying didn't need saying anymore.

It had stopped pushing. It was crushed. Stiff  
Like everything else.

Education, far too often, has been the process of stifling the individual urge to encounter the extent and the excitement of what it means to be a human being. Each man sits inside himself in his desk of proper

behavior, eager to emerge and engage in the human encounter; but few are called forth in the educational system.

If you have watched young children play school you have probably witnessed the clearest example possible of education as a dehumanizing process. I have a nine year old daughter in the fourth grade who wants to be a ballerina, a nurse, an actress, a fashion model, and the lover of Davy Jones of the Monkees. I am afraid, however, that she is going to be a school teacher. Since the first grade she has played school more than any other game. She can go for hours with an imaginary room full of imaginary recalcitrant students. She puts on a very good show. Her pedagogy consists primarily of chiding the bad children in her room. "Billy" is always talking out of turn. "Susie" leaves her seat without permission. "Johnnie" fails to give the expected answer. And poor "Herman" - he can do nothing right. "I don't know what I'm going to do with you, Herman" is the cue for a string of admonishments that includes such reinforcement as "Herman, did the Salvation Army leave you on your mother's doorstep?"

My daughter is saying many things in her acting out behavior - she is probably saying some important things about me. But I believe she is also saying a great deal about education and how she perceives it and how she has experienced it. I do not believe that her formal education has been an overwhelmingly creative and challenging experience.

#### Toward a New Model

In the dehumanizing production model of education, we have developed a society in which the old are plagued by heart attacks and the young by heartbreaks. Our noncognitive capacities have atrophied like an appendix.

But no man is so diminished, so emaciated, so retarded or polluted that he can escape responding to be himself, to be natural, to be more fully human when others call to him to be so and allow opportunities for him to answer that call. And there is a clear call today across the land for a new kind of education. Shakespeare has said, "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, when taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

(5) We are at the crest of a new humanistic education, and if the junior college will but respond to this call, this demand, for human liberation it will live up to its claim of being "the people's college."

The frenzy and violence that have gripped this nation for the past five years are but the symptoms of a people moving toward the completion of the Emancipation Proclamation. We are putting the finishing touches on the American dream in which every man is a man, socially, psychologically, economically. There are some nightmarish quarrels still to be solved regarding the nature of those finishing touches, but underneath the turbulence there is an opportunity for those new to freedom to experience what it means to be a man standing upright. The move toward personal freedom pervades the society; Blacks, Indians, Chicanos, women, farm laborers, poor people, students, and teachers are demanding full recognition in the family of man. Some of these groups must still achieve the lower level needs of survival and security in Maslow's hierarchy that have been denied them in our society, but these levels will be achieved. I believe we will meet these basic needs of diminished groups; we certainly have the resources to do so. But, after the challenge of learning how to survive, there is a challenge to surviving well. The junior college is playing an important role in helping diminished groups



survive, but it needs to begin preparing for a role of helping man survive well.

We are beginning to move in this country away from the Protestant Ethic toward the Humanistic Ethic, away from what is wrong with man to what is right with man, away from education as a dehumanizing production model to education as a humanizing model. The Age of Aquarius where "peace will guide the planets and love will steer the stars" may still seem far away but it is at least within our grasp.

John Gardner says:

...the possibilities of an improved life for mankind are more exciting than ever in the long history of the race. We hold in our hands tools to build the kind of society our forebears could only dream of...

To do this takes a commitment of mind and heart - as it always did. If we make that commitment, this society will more and more come to be what it was always meant to be: a fit place for the human being to grow and flourish. (6, 172)

If we are to humanize the educational process so that human beings can grow and flourish then we must learn to place human development - wherever this leads - as the central concern of education. The junior college as a production model will need to be restructured so that the humanization of the learning process can occur. What are some of the requirements of humanizing the learning process - of restructuring the junior college from a production model to a humanistic model? In a presentation this brief only a few examples can be given, but I hope they will be sufficient to point toward what I mean by the humanization of the learning process.

1. If we are to humanize the learning process, then the student must become the subject matter rather than the artificial division of

content which has served to guide education for thousands of years. The division of content was thought to be a more simple way to understand the nature of man, since all external knowledge is simply an extension of what man has invented in his own internal mind. Socrates understood the meaning of the learning process and summed it up in two words, "Know thyself." Somewhere along the way, however, we changed the focus from self to subject matter. At the present time we find ourselves in a situation in which new knowledge is developing so rapidly that at least we know we can't require students to know everything. There is still a focus, however, on subject matter learning as the central process of education. The new hardware-software technology as a more efficient way of learning subject matter has found great acceptance in the production model of the junior college.

Too many teachers simply take subject matter too seriously. Perhaps they have done so because mathematical figures or literary descriptions have given them some personal reason for existence in what might be an otherwise dry and hollow life. Teachers assume that similar modes of existence should be forced upon students. I believe that subject matter content has value only to the extent that it has meaning and is useful for the student's growth and development. We must learn to bend the content to the student's need rather than bending the student to the structure of the content.

One important development that has occurred because of this emerging belief of the student as subject matter is a course in self-development that is being organized by hundreds of junior colleges. Such a course is a course in introspection. It provides each student with an opportunity

to examine his values, attitudes, beliefs, and abilities, and with an opportunity to examine how these and other factors affect the quality of his relationships with others. In addition, he examines the social milieu - the challenges and problems of the society - as they relate to his development. Finally, the course provides each student with an opportunity to broaden and deepen a developing philosophy of life. Such a course has been perhaps one of the more imaginative responses to the students' demand for relevancy and meaningfulness in their educational experience.

2. There is no teaching unless students learn. We can no longer assume that learning occurs simply because a teacher is present in the classroom and goes through a series of exercises for a term. It is not enough to say that teachers have taught because they have covered the subject matter. Most teaching occurs through the lecture method in which the subject matter is covered for the students - a marvelous way of saying it. The important concept here is that teachers must be accountable for their teaching and must be able to show evidence that they have helped students learn. There are implications here for the kind of environment in which students learn best as well as for the systems approach in education in which students participate in the development of specific objectives toward which their education is aimed.

3. If we are to humanize the learning process we will begin to remove the barriers to learning, the peripheral hindrances that encumber students who wish to become all they are capable of becoming. We have, primarily through tradition, built a whole series of educational trappings that greatly hinder and even diminish a student's move toward self-

development. Testing programs, grades, and probation-suspension regulations are examples.

Before the student even comes to our classes, we begin threatening him with a testing program. A battery of tests before school begins, even if used for counseling and not for admissions, is, for many students, an act of jerking the sheets off them and exposing their inadequacies of which they are already so painfully aware. If they are not properly equipped, they are chastised by being placed in appropriate cells to breathe the tepid air they know so well. Testing is too often the process of reducing groups of students to the lowest common denominator. Many testing programs are built on the anti-life philosophy that there are zeros in human nature. A testing program that attempts to discover what is right with students so that the college can provide programs to support and develop that rightness might be a yeasty and welcome development in education.

Junior colleges have claimed to be student-centered institutions dedicated to helping students meet with success. But one of the most vicious educational trappings yet invented guarantees failure. The punitive and primitive grading system of A through F has been thought to be a universal language understood by everyone who needs to know anything about academic performance. Colleges grade differently; instructors grade differently. Instructors teaching the same course do not grade the same. Two instructors grading the same student for the same course will differ. Is grading a universal language? Perhaps. But few have learned to speak it well.

The F grade is an extension of the scarlet letter and represents the wrathfulness of the Protestant Ethic in that *all who fail must be punished.*

A student is required to wear his failure on his transcript for all to see for the duration of his life. Many junior colleges across the country are beginning to humanize the learning process by abandoning the F grade. Instead, they have developed grading systems of A, B, and C. Some colleges have retained the D grade, since it does indicate a low level of passing and will, on occasion, transfer to other institutions. Perhaps one day we will have the courage to move to a system that uses more meaningful and relevant indications of personal development than even A, B, and C. It seems to me we are now ready to move beyond the beginnings of the alphabet.

Another one of the great threats used against students has been the traditional probation and suspension system. The probation-suspension system, as it presently exists, is often a thinly disguised scheme for getting rid of unwanted students. Because of our inadequacies we have not learned to provide a good learning environment for the students on probation and suspension. We say that we have an open door philosophy in the junior college, but we continue to kick students out, semester after semester because of our own failure. Such a practice is as ridiculous as if hospitals were to discharge the sick and keep the healthy.

There are many barriers to learning that have become so accepted they go unquestioned. The lock-step curriculum, the 50 minute class, the student desk, the semester course, the teacher in front of the class, the rectangular classroom, the ringing bell, etc., etc., etc. All of these educational trappings should be examined carefully to see if they hinder more than they help as we attempt to provide opportunities for students to experience their most human qualities.

4. Instead of evaluation as the primary responsibility of the teacher,

evaluation of accomplishments should be the responsibility of the student. If we can provide the kind of climate that encourages self-development then the student will have to help us learn what his direction is so that we can best assist him in pursuing it; and since it will be his direction, he will be best qualified to know whether or not he has achieved it. Self evaluation then becomes a very important part of the humanization of the learning process. If we can build an open and honest community in the school environment, then students can certainly assist us in this process. But at the present time we have become a society of fools - depending on others to tell us how we feel, who we are, what we want.

5. If we are able to humanize the learning process, then the distinctions between student and teacher will probably become less discernible. Learning occurs when we meet ourselves and others in the process of our emerging humanity. It is an experience between and among people in which each comes to appreciate himself and others, in which each begins to grow, and in which each facilitates the growth of others. Education is not a cramming into but a leading out of.

"The end focus," as April O'Connell says, "is man - that is, ourselves, our perceptions of where we live, and our journey through the world - how we make it worth the effort and the suffering." April describes the humanization of the learning process as simply and as well as it has ever been said, "Education occurs when there is a meeting of persons." (7, 6) If education is a meeting between persons, then it follows that the teacher must be a person, not a machine who gives information, not a tyrant who reigns supreme in his own classroom, not a permissive nonentity who provides no challenge and encounter, not an insecure

and frightened animal who hides behind academic rigor and discipline lest others view his weaknesses, and not a carbon copy of some earlier teacher or professor who influenced him.

A term that describes this person better than teacher or professor or instructor is *human development facilitator*. One way of describing the human development facilitator is to present an idealized prototype of him as a person. While it is helpful to have a model as a goal, it is to be understood that individuals exist in a process of becoming in which they reflect only certain degrees of attainment of these characteristics. The kind of person who is needed, has been described by Maslow as self-actualizing, by Horney as self-realizing, by Privette as transcendent-functioning, and by Rogers as fully-functioning. Other humanistic psychologists such as Combs, Jourard, Perls, Otto, Moustakas, and Landsman have described such healthy personalities as open to experience, democratic, accepting, understanding, caring, supporting, approving, loving, non-judgmental. They tend to agree with the artist in Tennessee Williams' play *Night of the Iguana* who said, "Nothing human is disgusting." They tolerate ambiguity; their decisions come from within rather than from without; they have a zest for life, for experiencing, for touching, tasting, feeling, knowing. They risk involvement; they reach out for experiences; they are not afraid to encounter others or themselves. They believe that man is basically good, and, given the right conditions, will move in positive directions. They believe that every student is a gifted person, that every student has untapped potentialities, that every human being can live a much fuller life than he is currently experiencing. They understand the secret the fox told to the little prince: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." (8, 87)

While this is the description of a model that is far removed from what most of us have experienced in our education, I believe it is, nevertheless, the kind of model we should be striving for if we are to humanize the learning experience for our students.

But change is very slow in education and teachers perhaps are harder to change than anyone else. The catechism of education is repeated generation after generation and we tend to teach as we were taught. Education has become a castrating cycle in which educational eunuchs - by some dull miracle - beget their own kind. In short, most of us are but poor plastic copies of poor professors.

In our concern for the state of education, we seldom turn inward. It becomes easy to blame outside forces for our difficulties. In that regard, man progressed very little as a civilized being. Flip Wilson's Geraldine says, "The devil made me buy this dress." That is probably a funny line because it is an experience that finds great welcome in each of us. It is easier to blame outside forces for our present predicament rather than ourselves.

I have been a consultant in the past three years to some forty junior colleges in some seventeen states. Each college I visit has a well-worn list of excuses for ineffective educational programs. Here are some of the reasons given for ineffective programs and there are numerous others:

1. The facilities are inadequate.
2. There is not enough money.
3. There is a problem in communications.
4. The universities have not done a sufficient job in preparing good teachers.
5. Too many high school teachers move into the junior college.



6. The president is an ex-military man.
7. The students here really don't care.
8. The Department of Education or the Accrediting Agency or the Federal Government won't let us do what we need to do.

While these factors certainly do influence the quality of the educational program, I believe there is another factor of greater significance that keeps the humanization of the learning process from occurring. For the most part, educators lack the personal and professional identity to make them effective human development facilitators. Since their own personal identity has not been developed clearly, they have not paid much attention to human interaction with students and, therefore, the humanization of the learning process. If we would give importance to what is important then we must come to know ourselves and to wish for ourselves what we would wish for our students. We cannot give that which we do not have. We have tended to act as if it were better to understand human beings than to act like them. We cannot help another on his journey toward self development and fulfillment unless we ourselves have made at least a first step in our own journey. How can we facilitate the development of others when we have not experienced our own potential in fulfilling ways? How can we mobilize our energies toward positive development when our energies have been depleted in maintaining a communication system that is dehumanizing?

When human energy is not directed toward personally satisfying goals, there will be unsatisfactory programs supported by the weak excuses cited before as reasons for ineffectiveness. As educators we must learn to take care of ourselves. When we come to experience our strength and

potential as persons, moving toward self-actualization, we will learn in creative and innovative ways to take care of the peripheral problems that keep us from being effective. We will create new facilities or invent exciting ways to use the limited facilities that are available. We will learn to enlist students in our efforts to humanize the educational process and thereby increase our impact many fold. The focus will shift from weaknesses to strengths, from what can't be done to what can be done, from what is wrong with us to what is right with us. A program with that kind of focus will nurture and challenge staff members who will develop a sense of mission, community, and commitment that will serve to stimulate development that we call the humanization of the learning process.

Such a development is not likely to occur on a widespread basis for some time to come. But a few educators have begun to listen to the clear call from human beings in this society who wish to live more creative and fulfilling lives. The response has been in the form of a few imaginative and potent institutions such as Santa Fe. If the traditional production model is to be restructured then we will need many more such institutions. Warren Bennis has said, "For clues to the future, we must look in the mini-societies of the communes, the experimental schools, and the imaginative little groups that flourish in the armpits of giant bureaucracies."  
(9)

I am not optimistic that we will ever reach the ideal, but I am hopeful that we will move more and more in the direction of the humanistic ethic and away from the nihilistic ethic of the production model. Whether or not we do depends, in great part, upon junior college faculty members and administrators such as yourselves. And whether or not you can become

even more potent as an institution depends on your own personal commitment to become more potent individuals. You have got to take a little time for yourself and be willing to share in the journey of your colleagues. Langston Hughes, the famous Black poet, puts it together:

Folks, I'm tellin' you  
Birthing is hard  
And dying is mean ---  
So get yourself a little loving  
in between. (10, 22)

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