World War II alumni and the State Teachers College at Towson: a brief history of the school at war and its support for alumni in the armed forces

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Recommended Citation
Nasr, Nadia, "World War II alumni and the State Teachers College at Towson: a brief history of the school at war and its support for alumni in the armed forces" (2012). University Library. Paper 115.
http://scholarcommons.scu.edu/library/115

Presentation given at Alumni Association luncheon held at the Charlestown retirement community in conjunction with a Patrick Young's talk about veteran services at TU, Catonsville, MD.

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World War II Alumni and the State Teachers College at Towson

A Brief History of the School at War and its Support for Alumni in the Armed Forces
Currently Enrolled Male Students Depart STC to Enlist

After June 1941, when the provision to defer enlistment due to college enrollment expired, many male students took extended leaves of absence to enlist in the armed forces.

The Selective Service Act and the College Student
by Col. William H. Draper, Jr.
(Synopsis by Catherine Swain)

PRONOUNCED effect of the present war on the United States was evidenced on September 16, 1940, when the Selective Service Act became law. This act, the first peace-time conscription law in the history of the United States, has, in some way or another affected everyone in the country. Men students in our colleges and universities are no exception. In order to more clearly define the position of these men in relation to the Selective Service Act, Col. William H. Draper, Jr., recently delivered an address at the University of Michigan to a group of officials representing various universities and colleges.

April • 1941
STC Supports Enlisted Alumni With Letters and *Tower Lights*

October 17, 1941

Dear Boys:

Here is the letter I've been trying to send you since the middle of September. The college year is well under way now and almost before we know it the first half of the semester will be over. That means one group of seniors will come in from their final student teaching and the other group will fill their places in the centers.

This morning the Editor of the *Tower Light* came to see me today and said she was going to send a copy of the magazine to each of you. I'm sure you will enjoy the news in the *Tower Light* and I'll try to fill in news that you might not otherwise receive.

First, enrollment is somewhat lower than last year, the total number in the college being about 420. This decrease is due mainly to a smaller freshman class. With present openings in defense work around Baltimore and many high school graduates, I am sure, accept jobs instead of coming to the State Teachers College in spite of the fact that there is a need for more elementary teachers. A shortage has existed for the last few years and with so many of you on "extended leave" the shortage is acute. I think all of you would agree that we have a fine student body this year and a "good looking" freshman group.
Female Alumni Also Support the War Effort

The establishment of women’s organizations such as WACS (Women’s Army Corps), WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), and SPAR (U.S. Coast Guard Women’s Reserve) provided female STC alumni with opportunities to serve.
STC Creates Accelerated Curriculum

College Gears to Defense

Out of a possible 395, 283 students have decided to come to the 1942 summer session.

The accelerated curriculum is in, as far as State Teachers College is concerned. From now on, the majority of the students will work on a yearly schedule of 44 weeks. The former four-year course will be fitted into three years. Because of a sharp teacher shortage, some of the present Juniors and Sophomores will find themselves teaching on part-time while still working on their degrees.

What are the implications of these changes? Approval of them, as the best that could be worked out under the circumstances, has been given by 96% of the student body. But what will be the effect on enrollment of the Freshman classes of June and September? Will the stiffer program make us less appealing to high-school graduates? Will students whose budget demands that they earn their tuition during vacations be forced to drop out of school? How will extra-curricular activities be altered by the new program?

Students in every class are discussing these questions... *What about Tuition?*

The returns from the questionnaires handed in on Registration Day show that most students have no difficulty raising tuition for the summer school.

Yet a lot of the talk has centered about the finance problem. Several members from each of the three lower classes explain that they depended upon summer jobs to meet tuition. They are wondering how they will manage for the fall semester.

For the Juniors, a student loan fund is ready to help out. (This is sponsored by the College.) What will the Sophomores and Freshmen do? A hoped-for solution that may crystallize one of these days is federal subsidies for students in accelerated colleges. Until it does take form, however, the students who cannot afford the summer session will still be able to complete their work on a four-year basis, as ‘specials.’ Entering Freshmen who find it necessary can follow this plan too.

*Schedule too Heavy?*

Contrary to the testimony of a few harried Juniors, this semester’s schedule, for most sections, has only the normal number of credit hours. All Junior sections are carrying one more hour than usual—but although this extra work is necessary for the present Junior class, the administration says that next year it will be absorbed in the light autumn schedule of the Juniors.

*County Apprentices*

In the Junior sections that would be eligible to enroll in September, 26 students have agreed to accept jobs if recommended, and 12 have not. Some of the 12 live so far from the college that it would be impractical for them to come back every week to attend the Saturday Workshop. A few are eligible for the draft and naturally want to take their degrees as soon as they can.

Among the 26 who said “yes,” feeling shades from delight at an unusual opportunity, to firm determination to give the best possible service in the national emergency. We were a little surprised at the amount of enthusiasm the Juniors showed. It should be remembered that they all made their decisions before having any student teaching experience.

*Salute*

In the students to whom we talked while getting this article together, we noticed an attitude that would have

STC addresses teacher shortage by compressing academic program into 3 years. The school adds trigonometry, civil aeronautics, and physics to the curriculum to support civil defense.
Tower Light Begins Reporting on Enlisted Alumni

As STC students suspended their academic career for military service the student newspaper marked their departure. The Tower Light was sent abroad to enlisted alumni who relished news from home and helped them stay in touch with one another.
Tower Light Features Excerpts of Letters from Enlisted Alumni

NEWS FROM CAMP

In many mailboxes here at State Teachers letters from students who have entered the army turn up regularly, reminding us that “the Sun do move,” times do change, and that four years in Teachers College does not necessitate a career spent placidly within four classroom walls. And if we never before have observed that schoolteachers take well to soldiering, we do so now, as we give you this month’s crop of letters.

Private James G. Jeff writes from Fort McClellan, Alabama, in crisp military idiom: “. . . This fort is on a plateau in the southern foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Consequently, it is quite cold up here—especially in the morning when we turn out at 5:45. In our tents (we have no barracks to sleep in) fires must be made in the bitter cold of early morning. Then the Company is called out to stand reveille. Next we fall out, take our jackets off, and are then called back out (in our shirts) in the still cold morning. After exercises comes the soldier’s delight—chow.’ When breakfast is over, the sun is just beginning to come up over the mountains. Then the day’s work really begins, and we’re on the go—drilling or on special details—until the sun goes down, beyond Birmingham, beyond the Mississippi, and beyond the great Rockies, far to the West. . . .”

“. . . Of course, the contrast between a classroom and the Guard House is great. I find that I am able to adjust myself to the new environment, though. And one benefit I derived from being in the M. P. Department was a chance to go home. On December 28th I was assigned to escort a military prisoner back to his home station in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. After delivering the prisoner, I was given the privilege of visiting Baltimore for 24 hours. That was quite a break, since no one on our Field has been given a furlough since war was declared. You should have seen the expression on my mother’s face when I walked in unannounced, wearing my .45 automatic, with a ‘billy-club’ in my hand and a pair of handcuffs hanging from my belt . . .

“Bill Podlich and I often get together in bull sessions and recall the good old days at Towson. We get a kick out of some of our Army experiences. Incidentally, the boys gently chide us at times for being so ‘professional’ in attitude.

“Danny Austerlitz and Bernard Goldberg, two more of Towson’s alumni, are out here. We could almost start a school of our own . . .”

March 1942
Report on alumnus Ensign Aaron Seidler’s completion of Naval Aviation training and marriage

WINGS OF GOLD: Aaron Seidler, U.S.N.R., was in Baltimore recently, after having completed his several months’ training in Naval Aviation, sporting his braid and his Navy wings of gold. He stayed in town for a week or so (getting married meanwhile) and is now once more on active duty. Ensign Seidler was a three-letterman at STC, starring in basketball and soccer.
Tower Light G.I. Spotlight

Report on the internment of alumnus Lieutenant Luther Cox in a German prisoner camp

Editor's note: Lieutenant Cox had completed almost enough combat hours to be eligible for the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Official notice has been received that Lieutenant Cox is a German prisoner.
Tower Light G.I. Spotlight Mourns Loss of William Jett

In Memoriam

RESOLUTION FOR WILLIAM JETT

WHEREAS, William M. Jett, in his relation to the State Teachers College at Towson as student and leader of student affairs, attained a position of especial prominence and respect in this College,

WHEREAS, his belief in and adherence to ideals of democratic leadership were in accord with the finest traditions of this College,

WHEREAS, his qualities of open-mindedness in respect to dissimilar opinions and his initiative in formulating various ideas into a practical plan for the benefit of all have definitely furthered the democratic ideal in this College,

WHEREAS, we are in complete accord with these beliefs for which finally he fought — therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That as a student body, we will endeavor to perpetuate those principles so highly prized by him; and be it further

RESOLVED: That this resolution shall become a part of the permanent annals of the Student Government Association of the State Teachers College at Towson.

(Signed)

August 24, 1943

The Student Government Association of the State Teachers College at Towson.
Campus Elementary School Sells Defense Stamps

STC also held a rally to promote the sale of war bonds, kept chickens and ducks, and grew a Victory Garden.
STC Plans for Support to Veteran Alumni Returning From War

Dr. Wiedefeld and the Alumni Association begin plans in 1944 for the post-war support of alumni veterans – Alumni Victory Pool. Wiedefeld also established the junior college program to help returning veterans complete their degrees and transition back into civilian life.

OPEN LETTER TO THE ALUMNI

It was appropriate that our Founders Day celebrations this year were permeated with thoughts of our men and women who are in the armed services. They marked the culmination of long deliberations and conferences in which were considered plans for paying tribute to our own service groups.

We, like all colleges and universities throughout the country, are concerned about the future of our men now on combat duty. We know that we must make post-war plans to rehabilitate them socially and spiritually. The changes brought about in them by the experiences of this horrible war will make it difficult for them to adjust to civilian life. Unless those of us at home prepare to help them there will be a repetition of conditions which followed World War I. Then, too many of the men became greatly embittered by what they found. They accused those who stayed at home of profiteering on the altar of their sacrifice. They cursed the nation for which they had suffered and many felt that their sacrifices had been in vain. We must not permit a repetition of that condition. We cannot do much. We can do something. That we might present our alma mater with some symbol honoring these men and women has been the desire of all our college and alumni groups. All agreed that it should be in keeping with the spirit of the college and college life, and that it should afford opportunities for education to the entire college community, student body, and alumni.