

# Army's College Program Is Reported Bogged Down

## Specialized Training Courses, Due to Begin March 1, Still Struggling to Get Start— Educators Irked at Manpower Waste

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Bogged down in a mass of administrative difficulties, the Army's Specialized Training Program, scheduled to begin sending men to the nation's colleges and universities March 1, is still struggling to get under way, it was learned yesterday. As a result, only a fraction of the 150,000 men originally designated for this program has been selected and sent to the campuses.

A serious waste of manpower and educational facilities has resulted, college officials charged. Neither the students nor the colleges are certain what the Army specialized program really means, it was found. In recent months conferences have been held between the Army authorities and engineering deans, with a view to cutting through the confusion and setting up a workable plan.

Nothing definite has been resolved, however. The engineering schools are now operating at a 50 per cent capacity, with the pros-

pect that this will drop to 35 per cent by Summer.

Set up last Winter, the specialized training program was designed to utilize the colleges to prepare soldiers for four fields—engineering, medicine, psychology and foreign-area studies. The bulk of the men were to be trained in some phase of engineering.

Under the regulations established by the Army applicants were required to pass a general classification test with a score of 110 or better, must have been graduated from an accredited high school and be between the ages of 18 and 21. To qualify for advanced training the candidate was required to show at least one year of college work.

Only those who have completed or are in the process of completing the regular basic thirteen-week training of the Army are eligible for the college course. In practice this has meant that the students have been drafted, sent to camp for their basic instruction and then offered the opportunity of applying for the specialized plan. The Army decides to which college the men are to be sent.

When the program was first announced in February various educational groups warned that the plan would be difficult to administer. Particular doubt was expressed at the basic training provision, as it was felt that it would be inefficient to "yank out" the men from their classes and then send them back to other colleges after thirteen weeks in camp.

According to many college officials, the program is progressing even worse than had been anticipated. Thus far, it was estimated, less than 10,000 men have been returned to colleges throughout the country. In the Second Service Command, which includes New York, New Jersey and Delaware, fewer than 1,000 students are enrolled under the Army plan.

Dr. Francis J. Brown, consultant, American Council on Education, disclosed that facilities for training at least 41,000 soldier-students in technical and professional fields are going unused.

### Facilities For 41,000 More

Dr. Brown said that the council had made a survey of the 400 institutions whose eligibility for Army training contracts has been approved. Replies were received from 240 institutions, revealing that they could handle 41,000 more trainees than have been assigned.

The Army is finding it difficult to get the necessary number of men to go back to college. This in some instances is the fault of the local commandants, who do not want to lose their best men, and so discourage them from taking the examinations. It became so bad that a letter was sent out over the signature of General George C. Marshall, urging the camp authorities to cooperate with the Army Specialized Training Program.

Moreover, the soldiers are reluctant to take the training. Until recently the men lost whatever non-commissioned ratings they might have, once they embarked on a college course. Many feel that they can get ahead much faster by going to the Officers Candidate School, where they get their commissions in less time. Under the college plan the soldiers are not commissioned upon graduation.

Serious dislocations have resulted, which may affect the supply of trained men needed by the Army. Despite the urgent demand for engineers, the engineering schools of the country are operating at 50 per cent of their normal load, Dean E. A. Holbrook of the School of Engineering and Mines, Pittsburgh University, estimated. By July 1, when the reservists are called to service, Dean Holbrook said, the schools will drop to about 35 per cent of their normal capacities.

### Preparations Made by Schools

The trouble appears to lie in the fact that the engineering schools had expected to receive their allotment of men from the Army, but are still waiting for them. One Midwestern college had prepared for 900 students, but has not received one as yet. An Eastern college had leased quarters and made all the necessary arrangements for an assignment of 3,000 students on March 1, but nothing happened. Not a single man has as yet been assigned.

Actually, of the 155 engineering schools in the country, only eleven or twelve have received student-soldiers from the Army. The original plans called for the training of 110,000 out of the total 150,000, in the engineering schools. Of this number 60 per cent were to receive basic training and 40 per cent advanced training. All but 5 per cent of the remaining 40,000 were to be in the medical fields.

Many complaints have been received by the college deans from men in the camps, who are disturbed at the set-up. They write that there is no incentive for taking the Army program, and that many of them deliberately flunk the college examination. One soldier wrote:

"The reaction in this particular outfit to the training program is a very unfavorable one by both officers and men. Most of the men who are going to have to take the test are of a fairly high caliber

who have been more or less specially selected for the outfit. If they have to leave, it would leave a serious hole in the personnel which could not be filled.

"Naturally, this does not make the officers any too happy. As for the men, many of them have ratings they would lose, and others like the outfit so much that they don't want to leave it under any circumstances. I think what many of them are going to do is to deliberately flunk the test so they won't have to worry about being jerked out of the outfit."

### Many Complaints Received

Complaints also have been received by men who have returned to college after their thirteen weeks of basic training. At one of the colleges members of the advanced Reserve Officers Training Corps were taken out of their classes, sent to camp, put into uniform, and then after several days, returned to their college as student-soldiers. These men are now under military discipline; they must obey the "lights out" order at 10 P. M., and engage in other Army routine.

"It is impossible for us to keep up with our studies," one of the men admitted. "We do not have any time for homework or research. I don't know how we'll manage to get by without flunking out."

Alarmed at the way the Army's college program is proceeding, regional advisers of the engineering, science, management war training program together with deans of engineering colleges representing every section of the country met in Washington April 16 to determine a course of action. They learned that Paul V. McNutt, chairman of the War Manpower Commission, also was worried about the developments, and the educators received his promise of support.

At that meeting, two definite recommendations were adopted, intended to alleviate the more significant factors that were causing trouble. These were: 1. To do away with the requirement for the thirteen weeks' basic training in camps for students; and 2. To abolish the present curriculum established by the Army and rewrite it on the basis of a professional degree program, based on eleven twelve-week quarters.

According to the most recent reports, the proposals prepared by the educators are "moving along" on Mr. McNutt's desk, and may be acted upon shortly. A warning was issued by several of the deans that something must be done soon if the college program is to be salvaged.

### Situation Held Deteriorating

"The situation is deteriorating from day to day," one of the engineering deans said. "The engineering colleges are waiting for something to be done to correct a confusing condition."

The question of the curriculum has raised a strong controversy. At present the Army's engineering program calls for six or seven quarters—that is, from a year and a half, to a year and three-quarters.

ters. It is the contention of a number of educators that the students cannot possibly complete the regular four-year engineering course in less than two years. The deans are recommending that eleven quarters, or two-and-three-quarters years, be provided if any value is to be derived for either the Army or industry.

It would be far better, one of the leading deans of engineering said, if the Army permitted the students to take the thorough, professional course for a year or more, and then pull them out if needed for the services. Under that plan, he said, the men at least would get sufficient basic training in engineering to prove of some value.

Several colleges have indicated that the students will get little or no credit for the work they are taking under the Army's plan, if they desire to continue for their academic degrees later on. The abbreviated course was termed a "hybrid," being neither professional nor vocational.

"Under the Army program the boys are getting short-changed," one dean said. "Industry will not want them. In fact, they can prove of very little value to the Army itself."

On this point, however, there are differing views. In some quarters it was felt that the Army needs to train engineers in the shortest possible time, and even though they might not be professionally qualified from the college standpoint, they would be valuable to the Army. At any rate, the question is now being studied and some

changes may take place before long.

Standards used by the Army in selecting the men to be returned to the colleges appear to be in need of refinement. An illustration of this lack of coordination was given by Dean Parker H. Daggett of the Rutgers University Engineering School.

"The Army sent us 158 men, supposedly for advanced training," Dean Daggett said. "After we re-examined them, we discovered that only thirty-two were actually advanced. Another seventy-two are now taking refresher courses and will be qualified by July 1, while the rest will not be ready for advanced work until October."

Engineering specialists held that the Army program has bogged down because the Army did not call in proper advisers. They charge that the program has been prepared in a "hush-hush" atmosphere and that none of the leading engineering educators were asked to participate in developing the plan. Few are willing to talk "on the record" as they fear that reprisals may come their way. With the draft taking all the eligible students, they are dependent upon the Army to keep their classrooms open.

Because the engineering division of the Army's college project is by far the most important both in terms of numbers and need, it has received the greatest attention in the academic field. However, reports indicate that the other departments — medicine, psychology and foreign areas — are a long ways from hitting their stride. In most instances the Army has sent but token numbers of students to a few institutions.

Undergraduate students in engineering, medical or dental schools, as well as those engaged in scientific and specialized fields, have been deferred by the Selective Service board if they give promise of completing their course of study by July 1, 1945. This order, issued March 1 by Major Gen. Lewis B. Hershey, director, will permit thousands of boys to complete their engineering program.

#### Revocation of Order Seen

However, it was learned that Army officials object to this deferment and would like to see it revoked. They feel that all of the students should be placed under Army regulation and their studies supervised. It was freely predicted by several deans that the order deferring the students would be revoked by July 1.

Moreover, many of the students in engineering and other essential fields are in the reserve corps of the Army, Navy or Air Forces. These reservists have been called to service in large numbers, and the majority will leave within the next two months. This will mean, it was pointed out, a further draining away of students from the engineering classes.

In direct contrast to the Army's

plan, the Navy has its program well under way, and working smoothly. Educators were virtually unanimous in praising the V 12 program. The Navy is permitting the students to remain in their colleges, and is offering courses equivalent in almost every respect to that provided by the regular college program.

Under the Navy set-up, the college year is divided into three sixteen-week terms, while the Army has adopted the four quarter system. Educators point out that this difference will prove confusing, and may mean that some of the colleges will have to use two entirely different educational systems on the campus.

In college circles the hope is expressed that the Army Special Training Program will break away from the present "muddling" policy and will continue on a professional as well as educational basis.