

Here's how *Who's Who* list was selected

It appears that last week's announcement of nominees for *Who's Who* in American colleges and universities has caused quite a stir. A general campus discussion which seems to be forming over this question, is just what we like to see.

It would be a misfortune if a subject which has so much underlying importance were soon to be forgotten. Although it may at first seem to concern only those who were named this year, actually, everyone is somehow affected.

While being spectators to the *Who's Who* fuss, we think there are a few points connected with it that should be cleared up.

According to our information, the four faculty and two student members of the *Who's Who* committee believed that the recognition at their disposal should be awarded to men and women whose activity in school affairs had resulted in a broadening and reinforcing of student life. (We use these terms advisedly).

Scholarship, athletics, and popularity have their existing rewards, but that is not to deny that these qualities could possibly, or even desirably, be excluded from consideration. The essential idea was to single out contributions to student institutions irrespective of the origin and means of service.

But what about the method used to name these outstanding men and women? The committee followed this procedure: 75 seniors—they were the only ones eligible—were screened by their activities as listed by the dean of students' records and by the personal knowledge of the six-man committee. The preliminary candidates were sent postal cards asking them to submit full, up-to-date lists of their activities. These records supplemented by the seemingly prejudiced opinions of the committee members, were the basis for final selection. Each member of the committee listed his 24 choices and the number of votes received by each candidate was tabulated. The last few selections re-

quired a bit of arbitration but otherwise there was no pressuring and no campaigning, according to our informant.

Whether or not we agree with the objectives of the committee or approve of their machinery, we must admit that they adhered to their announced plans. These plans are a matter of record to be found in the minutes and debate of the ITSA board of control which sanctioned every action and motive of the committee. From here on we cease to defend the committee or the reputation of our staff members who were nominated.

What is this *Who's Who* in American colleges and universities, anyway? On a national scale it's nothing. Though it claims coverage in 600 institutions, many important colleges ignore the publication; the remainder use as many diverse methods of selecting their representatives as there are schools. Plain and simply, the book is a commercial enterprise—not the signal honor that many seem to think it is.

We've refrained from comment on the objectives and criteria of the committee but their naivete seems incredible. What constitutes useful contributions to student life and worthwhile influence in student affairs? We might be inclined to favor political activity but it is common knowledge that the student body is typically uninterested about student government. Some other faction may consider scholarship, honoraries, and professionals as the greatest contributors to student welfare. A good case could be built for the man in athletics whose many hours of physical activity are an inspiration to his more sedentary brethren.

Again, to what extent could the committee members possibly maintain the detached, impartial attitude demanded by their own procedure? If they had said that selections would be based on their own observations of popularity and on their purely personal yardsticks, they would have come close to the

truth. We are not accusing them of gross bias, but rather sympathizing with them. When one has finished looking over 75 comprehensive lists of activities he is more confused than when he started and quite disposed to rely on personal knowledge.

Another thing we can't hold with is a commonly stated principle: the more students on the screening board, the more justice to students. It seems to us that the two students, with all their good intentions, had more partiality in one finger than all four faculty members. Try and be disinterested when fraternity brothers or colleagues on athletics and publications are concerned.

Though we believe in averaging out the selection with more students participating, how can an arbitrary number like 24 nominations allocated by the *Who's Who* publishers represent a fair sample more than could ten "best dressed men"? In addition, are the inevitable bruised feelings, possible lowering of morale worth the raised egos of such a few?

This doesn't exhaust our ammunition by any means but space limitations must put an end to the number of criticisms we can fire. Anyhow we've said enough to prove our point. When something has no worthwhile purpose it is usually the custom to eliminate it. Otherwise it likely becomes malignant.

Who's Who should have been dropped in 1948; it becomes increasingly objectionable with each year. In the fall of the year, *Who's Who* time, whenever the question of participation comes up before ITSA, there always seem to be just enough proponents around to sad-

dle the student body with an unpopular, impossible measure.

Now that the affair has been exposed to widespread criticism, ITSA should reconsider its attitude on *Who's Who*. Its action cannot be binding on a succeeding board of control but perhaps some statement or resolution would go a long way towards setting a precedent of non-recognition to *Who's Who*.

Joe Bass.

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

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The name of Tom Murray was inadvertently omitted from the *Who's Who* list published in last week's *Technology News*. We regret the error and offer to Mr. Murray our most sincere apology.

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