

Health and Physical Fitness in Colleges and Universities

Report Adopted by the
U. S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION WARTIME COMMISSION
September 1, 1942

THE Educational Policies Commission has published the statement that, "the health, safety, and physical education program in the elementary and secondary schools and in higher institutions, should be given a high order of priority among competing educational interests." In a study conducted by the American Council on Education and the National Committee on Education and Defense, the first generalization drawn from the interviews with officers of the armed services relating to pre-induction training needs for enlisted men was that, "a more definite and consistent program for physical fitness should be developed and required of all students." The resolutions and recommendations adopted by the National Conference of College and University Presidents held in Baltimore on January 4, 1942, included the statement, "that all colleges and universities should take such steps as will be necessary to bring each individual student to his highest possible level of physical fitness."

The Divisional Committee on Higher Education of the Wartime Commission authorized N. P. Neilson to serve as chairman of a committee to study the problem and bring in a report. On May 7, 1942, a letter was sent to the officials of twelve national professional organizations and to selected individuals in thirty-five colleges and universities asking them to submit their recommendations to the chairman of the committee. The chairman summarized the recommendations received and on September 1, 1942, the United States Office of Education Wartime Commission adopted the following report.

General Statements

Physical fitness has a direct relationship to national defense. Good programs for health, physical education, and recreation yield important results related to physical fitness and hence to national defense whether the individual is to serve at the war front, in industry, or at home.

The term "fitness of the individual" or "fitness program" might well be substituted for the term "physical fitness" to avoid prolonging the false concept of mind and body as separately functioning parts of the organism. Hence, "physical fitness" in a broad sense is health; it involves the prevention of disease, the correction of remediable defects, good nutrition, muscular

strength, endurance, basic motor skills, mental health, and morale. A person is said to be physically fit when he is free from handicapping defects and infections, practices good mental hygiene, and has the knowledge, skills, strength, and endurance to engage successfully in the activities which life demands of him. In time of war life demands on the human organism are greater than in times of peace.

Biological differences among living organisms must be recognized. All men and women are not born equal in structure and function and there is no known method by which all persons can develop an equal degree of strength, skill, and endurance. It follows, therefore, that there will always be a necessary differentiation between those displaying a high degree of fitness and those with lesser degrees. No stigma should be attached to the latter group unless there is demonstrated neglect, indifference, and unwillingness to achieve the highest fitness possible.

To attain physical fitness there must be a complete medical examination of the individual to determine his physical structure and capacity. After this initial examination, a program to provide for the necessary correction of physical defects and faulty health practices and the improvement of physical development can be carried out. No matter how vigorously a program of physical development by exercise alone is pursued this cannot compensate for inherent or acquired structural and physiological abnormalities. On the other hand the complete correction of physical defects will not build organic power; this can be built only through physical education activities of great intensity and duration.

Health Service

The function of the student health service program in colleges and universities is two-fold: first, the immediate care of ills and maladjustments; and second, the directing of student thought and habits into a sane and balanced regime of living. It is recommended that:

1. A thorough health examination, medical and dental, be made of all students (a) upon entrance, (b) periodically thereafter, and (c) after each confining illness.
2. The seasonal examination of all varsity and intra-