

Wide Deficiencies Seen At Manhattan Community

By MICHAEL T. KAUFMAN

A confidential evaluation by the City University has concluded that Manhattan Community College is suffering from "severe deficiencies." The report has found that faculty morale "is at an all-time low," that student grades have been inflated beyond meaning and that the college has failed to provide counseling and remedial services for its students.

In a letter to Dr. Edgar F. Draper, the president of the school, that accompanied the study, Robert J. Kibbee, Chancellor of the City University, wrote that "the college is chewing on its vitals."

Chancellor Kibbee, in an interview this week, said that the evaluating team that wrote the

study seven months ago would return to the school next week to continue its monitoring effort.

"Any of the problems identified at [Manhattan Community] exist in some of the other parts of the University, but there is no other division with so many problems in one place," the Chancellor said.

Manhattan Community College is one of the ten two-year schools within the City University. It has 9,000 students who attend classes in rented space in seven buildings scattered in Midtown from West 48th Street to West 70th Street. As a community college it prepares students for transfer to four-year schools and trains others for careers as nurses, medical technicians, bookkeepers and secretarial workers.

In addition to obtaining the confidential 123-page evaluation, The New York Times conducted four weeks of interviews with faculty members, administrators and students at the school during which the

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following points were documented:

¶Close to 70 per cent of the nursing graduates have failed their state accreditation exams. The administration at Manhattan Community says the failure rate is similar to other community colleges; the Chancellor's office reports that it is higher.

¶The college is having trouble selecting a valedictorian at commencement exercises this spring because 14 students have perfect straight A averages. Other colleges usually have at the most one or two such students and some faculty members at Manhattan Community point to this as an index of debased standards.

¶Two years ago student fees were used to buy two automobiles for student government leaders. Other student fees were used to send 40 students on a trip to Africa. A faculty investigating committee reported that "while monies were improperly expended, pursuit of the situation would not be in the best interests of the overall student body."

¶Some faculty members contend that deans falling out of favor with the administration are given meaningless duties, or as the evaluation contends, "re-assigned to nonfunctional titles." Some of these deans are earning as much as \$40,000 a year.

¶Two months ago several professors picketed a testimonial dinner for President Draper and the faculty union charged the administration with intimidating teachers to

buy \$20 tickets to what they contended was a public-relations gimmick intended to mask failing morale.

The Chancellor's evaluation was carried out by a team led by two vice chancellors of the City University who spent several weeks at the college, interviewing faculty, administrators and students and examining records. The language of their findings often went beyond the dispassionate jargon of such reports. They charged Dr. Draper, for example, with failure "to recognize the most serious morale problems."

The conclusions, wrote the examiners, "are in direct conflict with Dr. Draper's statement that 'We are effectively meeting the challenge in the area of college morale.'"

In a letter to the Chancellor sent after he had read the evaluation, Dr. Draper took issue with the findings of the examiners. "It was not professional nor objective," he wrote. "One would suspect that the investigating team had the primary goal of discrediting our administration."

Dr. Draper complained that at least one of the examiners bore him a personal grudge going back to the days when the examiner was a student at Morgan State College and Dr. Draper was a business manager at the Maryland school.

In an interview this week, Dr. Draper said that college morale was "wonderful" and attributed criticism to a "disgruntled few."

"In any large institution you will always find a handful of embittered types who will take their grievances to the newspapers," said the 52-year-old

educator who became president of the college three years ago.

The interview took place in the college's administrative offices on the fourth floor of the Uris office Building at 1633 Broadway. One of the complaints of the evaluators was that these offices, which include those of department chairmen and the registrar, "are in a building where the management explicitly required the college to keep student traffic to a minimum."

In supporting its findings on low morale, the Chancellor's report contended that a recent "restructuring of the college was unmanageable and totally confusing." It noted a high turnover in deans, said there was a "lack of consultative process in the appointment of new officers," and alleged that faculty decisions on appointment and tenure often were disregarded.

Dr. Draper said these charges were untrue. A 120-page response to the evaluation, published by the college, which also was obtained by The Times, showed that faculty decisions on appointments were revised in only three of 170 cases.

However, an official of the faculty's union, the Professional Staff Congress, reported the listing did not include three deans who were granted tenure over the objections of faculty committees.

By far the largest section of the evaluation report dealt with problems in remedial education and it is in this area that much of the college factionalism apparently originated.

Since Open Admissions began four years ago, all divisions

of the City University have enrolled all high school graduates, large numbers of whom, educators say, are unprepared for college work because of faulty basic reading and mathematics skills.

All the other community colleges had long ago established formal Departments of Developmental Skills in which students are given regular instruction in fundamental subjects. Generally these students receive minimal or no college credit for such courses.

At Manhattan Community College there were no formal remediation classes until last fall. Instead students, some of whom read at the sixth-grade level or lower, were registered in the regular college courses of their choice. Instructors were supposed to spot students having trouble and to work informally with these men and women.

Dr. Draper has attributed the lack of a formal approach to remedial education to the alleged intransigence of a former dean of faculty, Dr. Eric James. It was Dr. James, a former Ambassador to Liberia, who had originally brought Dr. Draper to the school as his assistant dean.

The rift between the two men apparently cut deeply into the college community. "It was a patricide," said one professor in discussing the disagreement that ended when Dr. James left the school to become a professor of public administration at Baruch College two years ago.

In the evaluation the examiners disputed Dr. Draper's view.

"Contrary to Dr. Draper's

stated belief," the report said, "the evaluation team found no evidence of Dr. James's unwillingness to implement a remedial program. Actually, it was the President, who, on numerous occasions, expressed his lack of faith and opposition to remediation."

One consequence of this failure, said the report, was "that marks bore no relationship to the performances of students." In addition teachers at the school told The Times of being encouraged to pass and move along students who, because of academic deficiencies, had difficulty with college material.

In any case, under pressure from the Chancellor's office a formal remediation program was instituted at Manhattan Community for the last fall term.

However, the examiners were not satisfied with it. They said that too many students were exempted and that the cut-off requirement was too high. They also said that by awarding regular credits for the courses it was possible for students to receive 15 points, or one quarter of the credits needed for graduation, by mastering simple reading and arithmetic.

In rebuttal to these charges, the school administration wrote: "It should be pointed out that most laymen have a somewhat confused idea of the relationships which exist between reading level and functional abilities. For instance,

For instance, many jobs in our society (shop attendant, service-station attendant, warehousemen's assistant, etc.) call for a fourth-grade reading level. And The New York Times's news sections are written at a ninth-grade level."

Assignments Are Shifted

At his testimonial dinner at the Americana Hotel on March 29, President Draper said that the dean of faculty, Myron F. W. Pollock, had created a developmental skills program, "which, we believe, ranks among the best in the nation."

Yet two months earlier Dean Pollock was sharply denounced in a memorandum by Mervyn Keizer, the associate dean he had hired to head the program. Dean Keizer and four of his top aides had been removed from direct responsibility for the program by Dean Pollock. That move came four months after Dean Pollock had brought in Dean Keizer to take over the program from Rawn Spearman. Dean Spearman had been hired Sept. 1, and relieved of his major duties on Sept. 29, but remains at the school.

In their letter to President Draper, Dean Keizer and his aides accused the administration of bad faith and with seeking to make them scapegoats for administration failures.

The charges of student mispending of funds range back to the late nineteen-sixties when the college was brought to a standstill by political demonstrations led by a student gov-

strations led by a student government slate called the Third World Coalition. The current student government contends that this group spent a reserve fund of \$350,000 and that as a result the student coffers are now bare.

Of these funds, \$4,400 were used to pay for two Pontiacs that were registered to the president and treasurer of the Student Government. When the matter came to light two years ago, one of the cars was sold for \$1,000. The other was mysteriously bombed in Catonsville, Md., where some students had gone on a trip.

Another disbursement was made to send delegations of students, and in one case a nonstudent, to political meetings in Puerto Rico and New Orleans.

In an interview, President Draper said he thought some of the spending was "inappropriate," but he explained that the allocation of student funds, which was raised from the \$60 a year each student is required to pay, were governed not by the administration, but by a student-faculty board.

Student activities at the school have long been contentious and only last week the results of a student government election were impounded pending a review by the Honest Ballot Association. It is alleged that one slate of candidates used college funds to send campaign literature to the homes of 5,000 students.

Another recent tempest on the campus has involved the testimonial dinner for President Draper. In the interview, Dr. Draper pointed out that the attendance at the testimonial dinner of 237 of the school's more than 500 faculty members was an index "of our very fine morale." He said he was surprised when his aides planned the event and said he felt "it was a spontaneous thing arising from the faculty as a response to the charges by a handful of discontents."

The dissidents and admitted discontents see it differently. They produced memorandums in which department chairmen were requested to sell tickets for the dinner, which was scheduled just before decisions on reappointment and tenure were expected.

A faculty committee on the dinner met regularly and the minutes of one such meeting show that a recently tenured student counselor volunteered \$800 to pay for a band. The union newsletter described the dinner this way:

"The testimonial for the President, being contrived under the aegis of several highly paid members of his immediate staff, with the assistance of some equally well-paid satraps in other departments of the college, is the latest chapter in the unfolding drama at Borough of Manhattan Community College.

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"The idea, of course, is to create a positive image in the eyes of the new members of the new Board of Higher Education. Perhaps they think that a toast will distract the new board members from the grave issues at the College and the thick file on the President's abuses.

"All hail the President. Let him have a toast. Let him have French toast, buttered toast, Melba toast and all the milquetoasts the board can stomach. Let him use the Xerox machines and the postage meter and let him hire all the ballrooms in New York for his name's sake. But let him see—and let the new members of the board see—that none of this has anything to do with running a college."
