

Citizens League
545 Syndicate Building
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402

CITIZENS LEAGUE STATEMENT TO
HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 1969

On Schumann Bill for Community Colleges

The Citizens League supports the Schumann Bill. Our position on the need for community colleges in Minnesota was developed by a Citizens League research committee which studied the problem of the relationship between the junior colleges and area vocational schools over a year's time. We have copies of our complete report available.

It is important to clarify that our report is addressed only to the question of post-high school education . . . the opportunities for education for our youth after they leave high school. We are aware of the urgent need for improving vocational programs for students still in high school, but that is a separate subject.

It is important, also, to clarify that we are in no way questioning the ability of the existing area vocational schools and junior colleges to do the jobs they were assigned. As far as we know each is performing well in its own field of endeavor.

We support the Schumann Bill for the following reasons:

1. The bill will provide greater educational opportunities for students than now is possible in either the area vocational schools or the junior colleges. In a community college a student will have the option of taking vocational and academic offerings in any mix which best fits his goals. He will not be required to make a career decision before he enters the institution.

2. The bill will strengthen the ability of the Legislature to plan post-high school education throughout the state. The Legislature now determines the number and location of junior colleges and provides the bulk of their financing. The Legislature also provides the bulk of the financing for area vocational schools, but the decision on the number and location of such institutions is made by the State Board of Education. Consequently, the junior colleges and area vocational schools are developing as two distinctly separate, uncoordinated systems attempting to serve the same age group -- basically the first two years after high school.

3. The bill will enable much better planning in the Twin Cities area. Our organization has had a particular interest in following the development of junior colleges and vocational schools in the Twin Cities area. Since 1963 the Legislature has authorized six junior colleges here. We have had a particular shortage of good post-high school vocational-technical facilities. We have an outstanding institution in the St. Paul Vocational Technical Institute. Minneapolis also has an area vocational school, but its post-high school enrollment is much less than St. Paul's. Anoka opened a new area vocational school two years ago. A fourth institution is in the planning stages for suburban Hennepin County.

All of these area schools have been planned separately from the junior colleges. Additional area schools are being talked about for suburban Ramsey-Washington Counties and for Dakota County, but, again, without coordination with the junior colleges. There is a further problem in assuring good post-high school vocational training in the Twin Cities area because of the likelihood of possible heavy emphasis on high school vocational training in at least one of the new area schools being planned. Finally, there are many problems, including local financing, a fair share of state aids, and establishment of governing boards, which make it difficult for school districts in the Twin Cities area to cooperate in setting up area vocational schools.

4. The bill assures meaningful local control of the community colleges. Area vocational schools now are managed by local school districts and junior colleges are managed by the State Junior College Board. Under this bill community colleges would be run by boards made up of individuals from the local areas.

5. The bill does not force a marriage of existing area vocational schools with junior colleges. It provides that any local school board, if it desires, may turn over control of its area school to the proposed community college board. A local school board now operating an area vocational school will retain the option to keep the institution in its present form.

6. The bill does not provide for takeover of the area vocational schools by the academic interests. The bill abolishes the Junior College Board and sets up an entirely new board, with guarantees of representation from the vocational and junior college interests, equally, plus representation from the general public.