

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

OF

PAUL MOYER LIMBERT

PRESIDENT OF SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE



Bulletin of

SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE

Corporate Name

International Young Men's Christian Association College

---

SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE BULLETIN  
Vol. XXI NOVEMBER, 1946 No. 3

---

Published monthly, except June, July, August and January by the International Young Men's Christian Association College, Springfield, Mass. Entered as Second Class Matter at Springfield, Mass., under the Act of August 24, 1912.



## INAUGURAL ADDRESS

As I accept the symbols of authority — the charter and the seal of Springfield College — I recognize that when one is inducted into the presidency, he is being invested with a responsibility that is representative rather than purely personal. Having been called to be the sixth president of the International Young Men's Christian Association College, I hereby sincerely and solemnly vow that I shall seek to carry out this high trust with all the wisdom and faithfulness at my command.

This is a delegated authority and one can exercise it with credit only to the extent that he is sensitive to the highest aspirations of those who love this College and believe in it. In the company of people assembled here today, in addition to the delegates from other institutions whose goodwill we cherish, are all the major interests of Springfield College; the Corporators and Trustees who carry the legal responsibility, the Faculty who teach and administer, the Alumni who represent what this College has to offer in service to the community, the friends from this city and far beyond without whose support the College could not operate, and the students for whom in the last analysis the College really exists. Upon all of you, more than you may realize, I shall depend for confidence, counsel and cooperation.

A college president stands necessarily at the intersection of many avenues of interest and is subject inevitably to a variety of pressures. He can keep his feet and maintain his leadership only as all elements in the constituency of the College hold some basic aims in common and are conscious of moving in one well-defined direction. For this reason it seems particularly important on this occasion to review the major characteristics and purposes of this College and thereby to make this inaugural day genuinely a celebration of the corporate aspirations of this college community.

### DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

Every college or university has a "personality" of its own: special traditions, constituency, emphases. Some of these are accidental and superficial; others are so profound that those members of the student body and faculty who have caught the inner spirit would rather study or teach at this particular institution than anywhere else.

To a marked degree — and I speak not as an alumnus but as one who has known this college intimately for less than ten years — Springfield College has a distinctive institutional personality. There is an unusual maturity and informality in relations between students and faculty. There is a ruggedness and physical vigor that one would expect in a college where stress is laid on recreational and athletic skills. There is a realism about work and a simplicity of expenditures that grow out of the fact that neither the College nor the students are wealthy. There is also a restrained but sincere idealism in a college whose graduates go largely into vocations where the financial rewards are limited but the opportunity for personal and community service is great. There is a cosmopolitan flavor about a relatively small college that draws its students from many states and lands and not only carries the word "international" in its title but is honored to have hundreds of graduates at work in more than forty countries. And there is a closer identification than usual with the community in a college where scores of students each year are associated with educational, social and religious agencies as an integral part of their professional training.



These are observations that anyone could make who is familiar with the prevailing moods and patterns at Springfield College. But one must probe more deeply to identify the elements in the tradition of this College that provide both for continuity of endeavor and for a creative contribution in these formative postwar years. For details of organization and program one can turn to the recent report of the Trustees' Committee on Postwar Planning, which has become the official prospectus regarding the future of this College. Today I shall deal more informally with those central and essential elements in the life-stream of this institution which give me direction and dynamic as I begin this venture of the presidency.

### ACCENT ON YOUTH

Sixty years ago there was not a single person in America specially trained to work with youth outside the classroom, with the exception of a few instructors in formal calisthenics. There were competent teachers in schools and churches, well versed in subject matter; but there were no organized youth activities related to the school or the church. Team games and athletic contests between colleges were in their infancy. There was no boys' work in the modern sense; there were no scout troops, no summer camps, no supervised playgrounds. Commercial amusements were often deplored as of the devil, but no interesting alternative was presented to young people in the cities except in a few YMCA's where to the reading room and lecture hall had been added a gymnasium. But even here the employed officers came from other occupations and had no special training for work with youth.

Then there lived in Springfield, Massachusetts, a young minister of rare imagination who conceived the idea of a school for Christian workers in which young men would be trained for lay service in church and community to supplement the work of the pastor and evangelist. At the same time a few far-sighted leaders in the Young Men's Christian Association, established in America a generation earlier, built upon the idea of David Allen Reed by including in his School for Christian Workers a training school for employed officers in the YMCA. One of the most novel elements in the planning of these pioneers was the provision for a gymnasium as part of the equipment of the training school. Before long short courses were offered both for YMCA secretaries in general and for what were then called "gymnasium superintendents" in the YMCA.

Within ten years following this modest beginning at Winchester Square, there appeared two or three college buildings in the woods on the shore of Watershops Pond in the outskirts of Springfield, a location that in those days seemed suitable chiefly for icehouses and dumping grounds. At that point, in 1896, the first full-time president, a young man from Ohio who had just received the Ph.D. degree from a German university, was called to take charge of this YMCA Training School. When Dr. Doggett slipped into Springfield a little more than fifty years ago, there were no inauguration ceremonies, not even a reception committee. But before many years the name of Laurence L. Doggett was well-known not only in Springfield but in New York City, from which all financial blessings were thought to flow, and there came into being a standard college with spacious campus and a name known around the world.



Here, one might say, was the first "Springfield Plan" — a plan to train men under Christian auspices for professional careers related to the leadership of youth activities. And although the scope of training was soon extended beyond the YMCA to include schools and colleges and other public and private youth serving agencies, the accent was always on certain aspects of the development of youth that had been grossly neglected — particularly on the experience of boys and young people in groups in their leisure time and upon the physical development of youth. As recently as 1931 L. P. Jacks of Oxford found it necessary to exhort an American audience about the intrinsic importance of leisure-time education. I quote from an address made by Dr. Jacks at an International Recreation Congress in Toronto:

"Man is by nature a creative being . . . a skill-hungry animal. Play, recreation, leisure offer a great opportunity for awakening the self-activity, the dormant creativeness of human beings, which education has sadly neglected and work denied. . . . Education for leisure is not a trivial thing. It is essential to the health, happiness, intelligence, character, and vitality of our great population.

"A lamentable divorce exists in our educational system between athletics and learning, between mind culture and body culture. We want to end this and to carry on a co-education of mind and body, a genuine education of the whole man."

Whether he knew it or not, Principal Jacks was giving voice to a deep conviction that had been a dominant factor in the founding of this college forty-five years earlier.

### A STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION

The whole development of Springfield College over these sixty years may be viewed as an unfolding of the broader implications of this central emphasis on the training of leaders for youth groups and youth activities. There has been a continuing struggle to win complete recognition outside the College for the validity of this undertaking and within the College to make students and faculty aware of the full significance of this enterprise.

The first battle was to win recognition for the *religious* significance of this type of training. Luther Gulick had a hard time convincing YMCA leaders that physical education was a legitimate phase of their historic concern for "the spiritual condition of young men." To many people then, and some even now, body-building was a secondary consideration of little moment to those concerned with the so-called "higher things of life." By a stroke of genius Gulick devised a symbol that pictures the interrelationship of body, mind and spirit — the inverted triangle, signifying that the spiritual nature of man is dependent upon an alert mind and a sound body. It was largely through Dr. Gulick's leadership that the YMCA accepted the philosophy of the unity of personality as the basis of its physical work.

As a result of this pioneering effort at Springfield, the physical phase of education attained a new dignity. Conversely, the motivation for physical education and for work with boys at this College was from the beginning genuinely religious. Those who know far better than I the story of the influence of Springfield graduates on health, physical education and recreation around the world testify that this leadership is to be attributed not only to the skills that were learned here but to the spirit of lay Christian service that came to be embodied in this institution. At its best the emphasis here has been on educating persons *through* physical activity or, as one authority de-



finds the responsibility of physical educators, "to make individuals increasingly aware of and able to use the body as an instrument for the fullest expression of the total personality." Likewise, the motive back of training for professional work in the YMCA and similar agencies has been not so much to combat delinquency or to learn how to manage an institution as to develop Christian character through informal contacts with youth in their leisure hours.

A second struggle throughout the history of this College has been to gain recognition for the *intellectual* and *cultural* significance of the type of education to which Springfield has been committed. Some friendly critics of the YMCA Training School in collegiate circles were wont to ask: "This is good, but is it sufficiently academic?" And always there have been those high school advisers and other friends recommending prospective students who seem to feel that a strong body and an amiable spirit can compensate for limited intellectual ability. Consequently, those in charge of the policies of this College through the years have taken special pains to maintain high standards in the scholarship of its faculty and the selection of its students. A number of students in past years at Springfield were men who had graduated from liberal arts colleges and were spending one or two years here to get another bachelor's degree in physical education. The research that has been carried on in this institution is well known and respected in professional circles.

For several decades this College has been seeking to work out an effective integration of general and professional education. The curriculum includes a solid core of the natural sciences, the social sciences and the humanities, not only as a necessary basis for professional specialization but as indispensable for the development of the student as an individual and a citizen. For professional competence in the leadership of youth activities one needs to know not only how to do but why; he must not only carry out a program, but promote and interpret it; he deals not only with young people directly, but with parents and volunteer leaders and board members and colleagues in other agencies and schools. He must be a student not only of muscles and movement, but of the personality as a whole. He needs not only a knowledge of contemporary institutions and trends, but a grasp of the great ideas of the past and the deep-lying social forces that have moulded the present. In other words, the stress at Springfield College on professional training for direction of youth activities is not at the expense of general education and sound learning but involves experience in critical thinking, scientific mastery, and social awareness.

There is a third area in which there has been a struggle to portray the central emphasis of this College in its full dimensions; namely, a recognition of the *social* implications of the training of youth leaders. The rounded development of personality, so characteristic of the Springfield tradition, is an objective of highest worth only if the individual is seen in the social setting that conditions his development and provides the milieu for his mature endeavor. Attention to one's own physical growth, for example, does not automatically stimulate concern for the recreation and health needs of one's community. Preoccupation on the part of the teacher with sports and the leisure-time activities of youth frequently breeds apathy toward current social issues and a low level of political literacy. Nor is it enough to have a strong religious motivation, for unfortunately some ardent expressions of religion are highly individualistic and even politically corrupt.



Two factors historically at Springfield have operated powerfully in favor of breadth of social outlook. One has been the international character of the College. The two presidents—Dr. Doggett and Dr. Best—who have guided the destinies of this College for fifty years have been men of strong international concern with a warm welcome for students from abroad. Early in this century Springfield College became an institution to which YMCA's in other countries looked for the training of their own young men as leaders. In America this College was only one among hundreds of institutions of higher education; abroad, it has been regarded as the place in the United States where one is most likely to study if he wishes to be equipped for certain phases of youth work and physical education. It was inevitable in such a college environment that Springfield students would absorb a more-than-average interest in world affairs and that many of them would consider other countries as a potential field for their professional careers.

The second factor at Springfield that tends to stimulate a keen social outlook is the quality of religious emphasis in the College. When Christianity is true to the deep insights of the Hebrew prophets and of its own Founder, it generates a unique combination of inner spiritual emphasis and vigorous social concern that drives one to critical examination of established social patterns. Springfield College has a good record of academic freedom; on a number of occasions it has risked serious loss of financial support and popular approval rather than stifle the voice of professors whose interpretation of religious and social affairs was sincere but not wholly orthodox. This College has had its share — and perhaps more — of men on the faculty who taught history and sociology and economics and psychology and religion in such a way that few students could be content with the world as it is or concerned chiefly about their own personal advancement.

#### A CONTINUING CHARTER

Every college is tempted at times to depart from its historic tradition and become a different type of institution. Sometimes the temptation comes from donors, sometimes from alumni, occasionally from within the faculty itself. In the case of Springfield College, there has been wholesome discussion of other alternatives; there has been expansion of the program into related fields of training. We define our central purpose broadly enough to include training for adult education as well as youth activities and specialization in the counseling of individuals as well as in the leadership of groups. But there is no disposition to deviate from the basic objective that has guided the development of this College from the beginning; namely to specialize in the preparation of professional leaders for youth-serving organizations, both public and private. And the more one studies the struggle for full recognition of the significance of this educational undertaking, which I have sketched briefly in three phases, the more one realizes that this struggle is not over and these issues are not closed. We must continue to convince churchmen, schoolmen, and statesmen of the validity of this distinctive purpose. On our own campus we must continually clarify our central purpose so that both students and faculty may find greater meaning in this educational experience. Especially do we need to mobilize the energy and ideas of the men now thronging our gates who have seen war service on many fronts and bring to the College rare resources of experience and determination.

The wider significance of the pattern of youth activities that prevails in a given country was never so clear to me as when recently I spent a month



in Germany as a member of the Education Mission sponsored by our Department of State. There is a *totalitarian* pattern of youth activities, where all young people are forced into one large movement, where voluntary youth groups related to churches and other organizations are either banned or severely restricted, where a ruthless program of indoctrination seeks to mould the thinking and capture the loyalty of youth along lines fixed by the State. This pattern was not buried with Hitler and Mussolini; with some variations it prevails in a number of countries today.

There is another way of dealing with youth which represents an attitude of *laissez-faire* or indifference toward youth on the part of government. This pattern seems to be dominant today, for example, in France and Austria. There is no concerted effort to serve the out-of-school needs of all the youth of the community. Elders tend to be skeptical about the contribution of anyone under forty years of age or eager to exploit youth for a particular political party. Consequently, young people are either on the sidelines or drawn into political conflicts for which they have little training and less judgment.

There is a third distinctive pattern of youth activities that has developed particularly in the United States and Great Britain. In these countries there are many voluntary youth-serving organizations for recreational, educational and religious purposes, together with a few efforts to organize youth for political ends. There is a growing concern also on the part of government, local and national, to coordinate these various youth activities and to provide supplementary leadership and equipment from public funds. This is the pattern that is being developed in the American and British Zones of Germany to take the place of Hitler Youth. This, I am convinced, is a *democratic* pattern of youth activities.

It is my hope that in these postwar years so charged with social tensions, men who go out from Springfield College will see more clearly than ever the broader significance of the work with youth in which they engage in Christian Association, school, church, and elsewhere, so that they may give leadership to those forces in the community that are working for an extension of the ways of democracy. It is my hope that these men will be better equipped than ever to exercise such leadership because they have organized their own life and thought around well-defined purposes and are grounded in a religious faith that will give them both stability and courage in a world that for some decades will be harassed by conflict and confusion. It is my hope that Springfield College may become to an even greater extent a center for the study of the needs of youth and of the varying patterns of youth activities the world over, and a base of leadership training for agencies, schools, and governments in many countries.

In reaffirming the convictions that have guided Springfield College in the past and projecting the implications of these same convictions for the future, I trust that I have expressed the common aspirations of all who cherish this College and that for which it stands.

"Be this thy task, O Springfield,  
Thro' all the years."