

## Dean Nicholson To Retire in June After 46 Years

**Veteran Head of Student Affairs Office Has Worked with Every President of Minnesota**

It will be forty-six years next fall since a slender young man from Yellow Springs, Ohio, later a Nebraskan and graduate of the University of Nebraska, class of '94, came to the University of Minnesota as instructor in chemistry and laboratory assistant to Dr. George B. Frankforter.

When the end of June comes this man, known to tens of thousands of students as Dean Nick, otherwise Edward E. Nicholson, dean of student affairs, will retire under the age ruling. Almost no one else is now on the staff who was here when Dean Nicholson came. Andrew Boss, professor-emeritus at University Farm probably was, but he has been retired for several years, though one still sees him about. Dean Nicholson is proud of having worked with every president of the university. Although Dr. Folwell had retired as president he was teaching long after 1895.

Edward E. Nicholson, his middle name (one guess) is Everett, is not only dean of student affairs, he is the only dean of student affairs that Minnesota ever had. Dr. Cyrus Northrop thought he was the very man for the place when a need for such an official developed at Minnesota, and, although at first he did not have the present title, he undertook the task and his record is open for all to read.

As Dean Nicholson recalls it he and the late Dr. Everhard P. Harding were Dr. Frankforter's lab. assistants. Dr. Harding had been a massive linesman on famous Minnesota football teams of the late eighties and early nineties. He was professor of chemistry until his death a few years ago.

"My first opinion of Minnesota was amazement at its size," said Dean Nick. "Why, there were 2,100 students." Your correspondent was also surprised to learn that there had been so many in '95, but Dean Nicholson ought to know. "At Nebraska," he went on, "we then had only about 1,800, so you see Nebraska was pretty big, too, for the Grover Cleveland era, but the difference of 300 in favor of Minnesota impressed me."



Dean Edward E. Nicholson

Both the young chemistry instructor and Mrs. Nicholson enjoyed social affairs, the dean explained, and soon they found themselves being invited to many student events, sometimes as guests, for they were not much older than the students, and sometimes as chaperones. A kind of mutual approval sprang up between this couple and the student body, which laid the groundwork for the job into which Dean Nicholson was to find his way.

About five years after his arrival at Minnesota Mr. Nicholson was placed on the students work committee of that time. This was a body of several faculty members who served for a stated number of years, one retiring each year and the senior member in service being the annual chairman. When it came Dean Nicholson's turn to be chairman he tried some new tricks. For one thing, he kept records of all of the committee's doings; for another, he endeavored to get at the roots of the matter when students were in trouble. That is to say, when a student's mark began to slide, or when he showed other signs of delinquency, Nicholson didn't wait until the case became a serious one. He tried to pry the student out before he got in too deep. These policies seemed to succeed, for when his year of service as chairman was up Prexy Northrop asked him to continue in that post.

"I was interested in the students and always did whatever I could for them," he explained. "My rule was that if a student

could catch me outside the class or laboratory, my time was his."

### Student Contact Reorganized

The upshot of this situation was that Dr. Northrop named a committee, with Dr. Henry Nachtrieb, then head of zoology, as chairman, to see what form a student-administration organization should take. On recommendation of this committee Dean Nicholson was given a couple of laboratory assistants to carry part of his work in chemistry, and he was continued as the head of the committee for students. This was the beginning of the deanship of student affairs. Literally, the academic faculty was divided into an executive and an administrative committee, the first legislative and the second, administrative. It was of the second committee that he was made chairman. He was later made assistant to the late Dean John Florian Downey of the College of Science, Literature and the Arts. The present organization, carrying the title, dean of student affairs, was finally created in the last year of the presidency of Dr. George Edgar Vincent.

Naturally, there were many problems having to do with student life in the early days of the University of Minnesota, just as there are today, probably in forms not greatly changed. The demarcation between fraternity men and non-fraternity men, or "barbs" as they were then called, was much

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## Dean Nicholson Serves 46 Years

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sharper than it is today. Feeling between the two groups was high, chiefly due to ill-conceived and youthful philosophies. There was also a good deal of cribbing, the dean thought. Maybe he knew.

To deal with the latter he proposed to President Northrop the establishment of a student council in the Arts College, and with it, the creation of an honor system. President Northrop was lukewarm on this suggestion, but finally the plan was adopted for the one college. It worked so well that it was eventually extended to other colleges. But by now it was found that the same proceedings and rules for student governance could not be applied with equal ease in all colleges, so the independent college councils were supplemented by the All-University Student Council.

Among the many student activities that have been re-organized through student effort initiated in the office of the dean of student affairs, are university publications, under the Board in Control of Student Publications, the finances of student activities, the management of student trips, the fraternity situation and the like.

Dean Nicholson's method has been to have student groups propose changes beneficial to student government instead of endeavoring to force new organizations on the students. A referendum in the spring of 1923 led to organization

of the Board of Publications, which slowly but surely pulled the student publications out of the financial mire and made at least The Minnesota Daily a considerable money maker.

### Student Finances Supervised

Creation of the supervisory system for all student activities that involve the handling of money, and the appointment of Carroll Geddes to manage that division of the work has removed the cry, so often heard in times past, that student activities were a source of graft.

Final governance of student activities rests (other than the always final power of the president's office) in the Senate Committee on Students Affairs, which may always take up any student tangle that a subordinate committee has been unable to unsnarl.

Gray Friars, Iron Wedge and Silver Spur, formerly, perhaps, more active on the campus than today, were created as men's service clubs on the campus. When they got too deeply into politics, student leaders proposed and carried through a new method of election under which carefully chosen committees select the members of these bodies which were formerly self-perpetuating.

"I believe one of the great advantages of bringing students into university activities is that it gives a number of our fine students a chance really to learn about the university," said Dean Nicholson. "When they are graduated they carry this knowledge with them. It makes them better citizens and it certainly makes them better supporters of the University of Minnesota. They know enough about it to be able to help at the right times and places."

### Helps in Tight Places

Dean Nicholson's work is not restricted to student organizations. He has also to do with student disorganization. It would be too much to expect that between 9,000 and 10,000 young men, and there are that many young men at Minnesota, should never get into trouble. Some of them do, and Dean Nicholson's acquaintance with certain sturdy police officials, sheriffs, jailers and the like has stood many a misfortunate in good stead.

"I deal with the officers of the law on the basis of mutual understanding," he said. "I have always tried to be honest in my recommendations. As a result, if I have said that it was my honest opinion that John W. So and So would be a good boy if he were let out,

retired.

John has usually been paroled in like fashion he has received innumerable requests that recommend a senior for some business position. He has never tried to interfere in any way with established placement organization but has so wide an acquaintance that inquiries just come him anyway.

Dean Nicholson says that girls sometimes come to him for advice although most of his dealings are with men students.

"Girl students sometimes want to see a matter from a man's point of view," he said. "Also, many students sometimes want to find out how a woman thinks and they go to Dean Blitz who can't understand why the young man with whom he is in love 'acts that way' he may seek his information in the office of the dean of women. It works both ways."

Being quite human, Dean Nicholson has his definitely shady side for he goes fishing and smokes cigarettes. Twenty years ago used to take a little walk about the campus in mid-morning to in his smoke. Now standards have changed in this regard, and even dares smoke right in his office, though not when students present. His fly-rod and his chant for small-mouthed bass fishing are well known.

Dean Nicholson has managed the Dad's Days and Mother's I of the University ever since they were established in the late 'twenties. He also was the moving force in the organization of Minnesota Dad's Association

which has worked on a state-wide basis to advance the universal interests.

"A'weel! One can't remain a dean forever. But many of them will still see Dean Nicholson from time to time after he is retired.

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