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**ABSTRACT**

This paper is an informal account of the establishment and operation of a U.S. Army Predischarge Education Program (PREP) in which Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) aided a junior college in providing high school graduates with significant preparation for college work. PREP is designed for servicemen and women soon to be discharged, who need help and encouragement if they are to take advantage of available education benefits. PREP offers disadvantaged students the opportunity to develop skills and the self-confidence they will need to succeed in higher education and in careers. (Author/ME)

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## The PREP Program at Monterey Peninsula College

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### Prefatory Note

This paper was presented at the American Association of Junior Colleges Convention in Washington, D.C., in March 1971. The activity described, the establishment and operation of a Predischarge Education Program, was performed by the Human Resources Research Organization, Division No. 3, Presidio of Monterey, California, where Dr. Bialek is a Senior Staff Scientist.

## THE PREP PROGRAM AT MONTEREY PENINSULA COLLEGE

Hilton M. Bialek

This is an informal narrative of the events and actions leading to the establishment and operation of a Predischarge Education Program (PREP), and a brief description of that program as it now exists. Certain events and actions are probably applicable to the establishment of a PREP program in any community college. Others are unique to the individuals involved in this particular program.

A document from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) entitled *College Participation in Specialized Programs for Men Leaving Military Service*, June 1970, provides the guidelines and cites the authorization for establishing a PREP course. Instructions for preparing a proposal to establish a program are also given.

For a program to get started, the local college and the military installation must agree that (a) the college has the interest, facilities, and wherewithal to put a program together and (b) the military post has the means to attract and enroll a sufficient number of eligible students.

The first step is for the college to gain approval for establishing a program from the Department of Defense. The application for approval is quite simple and direct. In the letter of approval, Mr. Mark Colburn, Deputy Director, Transitional Manpower Programs states:

“Probably the most important feature of our approach to PREP is the desire to involve young men and women who do not think of themselves as college material, the man from the culturally deprived home, the man whose academic record shows more failures than successes. Conversely, we do not want to direct our efforts primarily to the man who has a desire to go to college and needs only additional remedial assistance.”

In other communications, Mr. Colburn has repeatedly emphasized his support for innovative and stimulating approaches to the problem of getting these men and women “turned on”—to themselves, to the forces affecting their lives, and to the choices confronting them.

A problem arises, however, when after receiving Department of Defense approval of a program, the college then must seek funding and state approval, since Defense Department approval does not bring in funds or provide licensed acceptance of the program within the educational community. Thus, activities of two additional agencies must be brought into the picture for the program to become operational: the Veterans Administration for funding, and the State Department of Education for approval of course outlines. In contrast to the Department of Defense, these two agencies tend to take a traditional approach to education and require that a proposed program be stated in terms of subject content/hours. Although an innovative approach was planned, the program could be described in traditional terms; this was done, and approval was received from both agencies.

The submitted budget requested \$170 per month per participating soldier from the Veterans Administration. State funds based on ADA allotments per student were the secondary source of income. About 70% of the income of our initial budget was from the VA, the remainder from the state. Upon admission to the program, each soldier signed a waiver to the effect that the monthly VA allotment, which by law goes to the student who in turn would pay the educational institution, would be signed over to the college. Thus the college is assured of its funds. The soldier's time in the program is *not* subtracted from his eventual GI Bill benefits.

At this point, it would be well to digress briefly to describe the role that the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) has assumed in this effort. For a number of years, administrators from the college and from HumRRO have been attempting to obtain funding for educational programs that would be innovative in nature and would provide an opportunity to combine training/education with program development, research, and evaluation. When the college was approached to establish PREP, HumRRO was asked to develop and manage the program. The perceived advantages were:

- (1) HumRRO's long history of successful interaction with the Army.
- (2) The opportunity to utilize HumRRO's administrative resources and experienced personnel to set up such a program.
- (3) Recognition that innovative departures in educational practices might be more easily instigated from outside the college.
- (4) The demonstrated capacity of HumRRO to provide systematic evaluation procedures.

It was possible to arrange for HumRRO to provide these services to the college under the funding that could be made available for setting up the program. Accordingly, HumRRO has, to date, written the document submitted for approval, assisted in the development and presentation of the budget, interviewed and recruited a staff, interviewed prospective students, designed a program evaluation, and supervised the operation of the program. The feasibility of this arrangement depends, of course, upon full and enthusiastic support from the college administration and faculty—that support has been outstanding.

## PHILOSOPHY, OBJECTIVES, AND STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM

### Background

The problem was to develop and establish a course that would provide high school graduates who were soon to be discharged from the Army with significant preparation for college work. The aim was to stimulate interested, constructive participation in studies, which, while retaining certain valuable aspects of traditional English and social science courses, would include and integrate the areas of political science, art, natural sciences, psychology, economics, and religion, in an effort to unify and intensify the students' insights into their world. It was further believed that such a program, if it could be tried and proven, would have important implications for a wide range of educational institutions.

### Objectives

(1) The long-range purpose was, and is, to develop in the Monterey Peninsula Junior College a flexible, lively course of study for persons who normally do not consider college a feasible alternative. It is the intention to employ the best elements of cooperative-teaching and group-teaching techniques, which may serve widely as a prototype for other institutions serving similar populations.

(2) In developing such a course for pre-college Army personnel, the primary goals are:

- (a) To provide a program incorporating the areas of politics, art, religion, ethics, science, and psychology, with an eye to stimulating enthusiasms and insights not commonly experienced by such students.
- (b) To provide a program where students can develop basic communication skills, develop concepts of citizenship, explore emotional growth, and develop individual goals.
- (c) To establish staff-student "connections" so that education becomes a personal, significant experience rather than a simple transmittal of information.
- (d) To assist students in making their next decision, on what to do after military service is over—college entrance, job, and so forth.

A definite advantage that existed in the establishment of this program was the freedom to (a) take any approach that seemed promising and (b) hire persons with good potential as instructors regardless of whether they had the teaching credentials that are normally required. Thus it was possible to hire, for example, a person who has had extensive experience in working with people (both individually and in groups), and who has provided the major thrust in that aspect of the program directed toward self-awareness and self-realization.

Because of the composition of the staff (deliberately chosen for varied ideas and innovative approaches), there exists within the program a certain degree of tension or conflict between the two classical approaches to education; content vs. process, subject-oriented vs. people-oriented, structure vs. no structure, and so forth. The entire staff recognizes these polarities and are working together to create a viable balance. The staff has spent, and continues to spend each day, a considerable amount of time, not only in planning the substance of the program, but in working out ways of effectively dealing with each other and with the students in meaningful ways. All have realized, even at this early date, that they are involved in an educational experience different from any they have previously encountered. To say the least, they find it more intense and exhausting than anticipated. Perhaps this will become modified over successive cycles.

To date in the program, we have utilized the student arrangements shown along the side of the following activity matrix, involving the activities shown along the top of the matrix. At the completion of each day, one of the staff members records the number of hours and number of pupils in the appropriate cells. The areas of science, art, religion, and history were arrived at through classroom discussion. Out of a large number of possible areas of inquiry, these four were reached by consensus and students were free to select membership in any of the four. These "project" groups meet regularly and periodically must prepare a report requiring research, which is presented to the remainder

**Activities in the Program**

Class Structure	Personal Orientation	Math	English	Science	Art	Religion	History	Other (specify)
Large Group								
Small Group								
Individualized								
Other (Specify)								



of the class. Each group is led by one of the instructors. Math and English groups meet at specified times at least three times a week. It is here that one-to-one or small-group instruction in grammar, composition, and so forth is carried on. Math is taught through a programmed, self-instructional text. Student tutors are also available for students requiring special attention.

A handful of students have also enrolled in a regular remedial reading course offered by the college. The "Personal Orientation" heading refers to those occasions when one or more of the instructors meet with groups of students for "rap" sessions or discussions of topics in the area of social and psychological awareness. In addition, instructors do arrange for individualized sessions with any student requesting them. Finally, any student is free to enroll in any evening or regular day course he is eligible for, providing he has the time. The major problem here is that the PREP calendar and the college semester calendar do not coincide. The staff also plans to invite interested college faculty and others in the community to the program to provide another source of information and stimulation to the students.<sup>1</sup>

Completion of the information entered in these daily activity sheets will provide a convenient summary of the overall shape of a complete cycle. We have noted already (after three weeks of the first cycle) that we are modifying our distribution of activities as well as, on a more specific level, the demands and requirements imposed on the students. Discussion of these findings will be included in the evaluation report that will follow each cycle. In addition to the foregoing descriptive information, evaluation will probably include:

- (1) Pre-post measures of mathematical achievement
- (2) Pre-post measures on an English placement test
- (3) Pre-post measures on a commercial, standardized "self-actualization" scale (Personal Orientation Inventory)
- (4) Qualitative descriptions of samples of student composition
- (5) Student written self-evaluation of the program
- (6) Staff written self-evaluation of the program

To date only one student has dropped out of the program and the reason was strictly a personal, family concern. The Veterans Administration has ruled that they will fully fund the college for all students who enroll and begin the program, without penalty for dropouts. However, if the dropout rate becomes significant, then the premises and operation of the program will have to be changed.

<sup>1</sup>The reader interested in more specific details of the program can refer to the Appendix. The informal comments were prepared by the PREP instructional staff.

## Appendix

### INFORMAL COMMENTS PROVIDING AN OVERALL VIEW OF PREP ACTIVITIES TO DATE

Large-group discussions or "rap" sessions have included analysis and response to such problems as the following: What is the significance of the President's State-of-the-Union Message? What are the sources of pollution? What is faith, religion, God? Are we really aware of our feelings in various situations? How far can we "push" a fellow man to share himself with us? How much authority should the Army exert over soldiers? Are we aware of the effect of our communications on others? What does the structure of a supermarket say about American society? Can we achieve a "set" way of life or should we remain always "open-ended"?

Students have described "where they are" through the explanation of maps they drew depicting their feelings about themselves in any convenient symbolic form. They also wrote follow-up essays on the same subject.

Instructors have handed out essays by contemporary thinkers to be studied and discussed in terms of content, feeling, structure, and so on.

Most written assignments are left to student discretion with the proviso that course-credit depends on work done. Students are asked to indicate the type of response they wish; e.g. comments, corrections, conference.

All written materials handed in by students are copied and kept in confidential file for final evaluation in terms of college credit.

Students in small groups have made presentations, both individual and cooperative, from research projects to "happenings".

Experiments in communication. Students communicated for one minute sitting back-to-back, then they reversed their chairs and repeated the process. Psychodrama was employed to explore the relationship between a student and his commanding officer in a dispute concerning length of hair. Both roles were played by students with the assistance of "doubles". Roles were frequently reversed. The culmination saw the entire class firing comments and questions at the student in an uninhibited style.

We have tried "free-association" sessions in which we asked the students to express whatever thoughts were triggered off by each others' words.

A guest speaker, an intense, aware, innovative Roman Catholic priest, often in opposition to traditional church dogma, led the group in an extended session on religion.

Filming of project. Experimental footage was taken and shown by a photographer who is already noted for his still photographs of news events.

Field trip. About half the men toured a nearby "natural food store" and many stayed to dine on organic food cooked in the adjoining restaurant.

We have attempted to structure the physical environment in a manner not usually associated with traditional academic motifs. We have installed some couches and easy chairs as well as a refreshment table with coffee, tea, cookies etc. Large bulletin boards have also been installed and were quickly decorated by the students.

Our approach to lateness and absenteeism is more relaxed than many traditional schools, but we do work with students who have problems in this area.

### ENGLISH SPECIAL SKILLS GROUP ACTIVITIES

**Idioms:** The class is collecting long lists of idiomatic expressions as a means of understanding the role language plays in the identification of various groups and levels of society.

**Grammar:** Working from *Guide to Rapid Revision* by Pearlman and Pearlman, students examine points of grammar and punctuation upon which errors occur most frequently.

**Analysis of Paragraphs:** Paragraphs drawn both from student themes and *Finding Main Ideas* by Joffe are analyzed by the entire group.

Work is planned to explore communications in different forms and media.

A dramatic group has been formed to stage plays.

Manuscripts for a literary magazine are being collected.

### MAPS: DESCRIPTION OF ONE TECHNIQUE USED IN PREP

"Maps" are a method and shell, which is designed to facilitate the individual's ability towards *focusing* his (or her) *sensitivities* and *awareness* upon himself, with an eye towards sharing this self-exposure with "others" (the class). This exposure will create an atmosphere for greater educational sharing, "as well as directly introducing the concept of self strength, direction and motivation; rather than the old pattern of teacher giveth all the answers."

The maps are introduced on the first week of the 11-week cycle. Each student is given a white cardboard 22 x 29 ½, along with a variety of colored marking pens (thick tipped). Crayons, pencils or things in these categories can be used. The basic design of the maps as related to the class is as follows. Each individual is to get by himself for a 45 minute period somewhere in the classroom, and design a "personal" map that contains a present, past, and future. All of these are to be put down on the cardboard in any order or fashion, utilizing color, symbols, words, designs, or what ever strikes the fancy of the individual while doing his map. The ideas that are transmitted to the board should emanate out of the individual's "Now" feelings, and fancy!! The *now* being those moments while they are working on their maps.

The students are told that they will have to interpret their maps to the class; in a sense orient others to their symbols and designs. This sense of sharing will take place twice

more in the 11-week cycle—once in the middle, during the 5th week and then a last one during the 10th week. After the first map and the last map the students are asked to write a page or two of expression on their feelings and evaluations of this experience and add any clarification of their own maps they feel is necessary.

In the second and third maps the emphasis is put on their experiences in the PREP Program or at least their lives within this period, another thru the way back past although this information is not to be restricted from their maps if they need to include it. Also in the second and third maps the "notion of the most significant incident" in your past as you flash on it "Now" is to be captured in your map! Another dimension introduced in the third map particularly, is that of "other people". The need for or not of these or that other person.

To date, the first two presentations have been completed. For a substantial majority of the class, the experience has been highly significant and appears to be a most promising technique.

## MATH

We are using a programmed basic skills math text: *A First Program in Mathematics*. The book is somewhat confusingly laid out but the students soon caught on. In general it seems that the majority of the students find the book satisfactory; some even find it exciting. Two people were not well enough prepared to even plug into the book. About five or six out of the thirty found it too elementary. These people are being steered into an algebra programmed text and should be happy there. A few people have requested tutors for the arithmetic sections and these are being provided on a one-to-one basis. Several people have expressed a need for help in the future with the algebra. I think a small class will be set up with an experienced tutor in the math department to fulfill this need.

In general the math has been much more successful than I initially hoped for. I think that we will retain the basic text as well as the algebra review manual. In the future I think we might be wise to include a little more basic mathematical orientation (history, philosophy, basic concepts, relations of various phases of math to one another, etc.). The math program could then be plugged more directly into the basic flow of the overall program. Math, too, has possibilities of expanding a person's awareness of the world around him, and we should utilize these opportunities.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

With the MAPS, small groups, large groups, field trips, speakers, movies, and individual conferences, there has been and is a real exchange of ideas among the men, exposure to new ideas and information about themselves and the world around them. The pace is rather intense but we think that there will be something which most men will grab hold of to begin to define who they are, what they want to do, and how they are going to do it. What this really means is that for many of these men they are grappling with freedom, responsibility, decision-making, citizenship, self-definition all together because all these ingredients are interdependent. For some men it is a slow process which can only be initiated and for others this seems to be what they have been waiting for. They are taking the information and knowledge and really running with it and enjoying it.

We are only beginning. At this writing our first cycle is only half completed. We are encouraged, excited, discouraged and involved! We're optimistic that we can continue to develop and that this is truly a viable and meaningful way of education.