

SCIENCE

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RESEARCH AS A UNIVERSITY FUNCTION¹

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SCIENTIFIC research implies independent and original thinking. It takes for granted that the person has made himself master of recognized facts in the domain where he proposes to extend the boundaries of knowledge, or will proceed to acquire the information. It also takes for granted that every conception is to be tested by material manipulation.

The modern university is derived by integration and adaptation from the learned teaching institutions of early times. As a consequence many medieval features still control the modern institution, often restricting its usefulness. The medieval universities were founded for monks and clerics, who instructed boys and young men in the accepted learning of the times. What they did in the way of adding to the store of knowledge or arranging it for better presentation was done in the quiet of the cloister without thought of reward. In the modern university the investigator may work because he finds pleasure in doing so, and without expectation of encouragement or pecuniary assistance, if he so chooses, but it is the medieval way and not consonant either with the requirements or

¹ The local chapter of the Society of the Sigma Xi in Purdue University, desirous of "encouraging original investigation in science, pure and applied," in accordance with the requirements of its constitution, discussed methods of procedure at a meeting in May, 1918. It concluded that the first thing to do was to make "a survey of the research work in Purdue." Accordingly a committee was appointed, which sent a questionnaire to every member of the instructional force of the university without regard to membership in the society. The report of the committee was presented at a meeting of the chapter January 21, 1919, and the following remarks were made by the president of the chapter as a part of the discussion which followed.

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