

The Characteristics and Enlightenment of American College of Arts and Sciences

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Abstract: The College of Arts and Sciences is a unique type of higher education institution in American higher education. It has experienced many challenges in its historical development. However, it has been adhering to the liberal arts education concept and paying attention to quality undergraduate education. It still has a place in American higher education. The development experience and characteristics of the American College of Arts and Sciences have important reference significance for guiding the comprehensive reform of higher education in China and improving the quality of undergraduate education.

1. History of the American College of Arts and Sciences

1.1 College of Arts and Sciences in the era of college

Throughout the 17th century, there were only two colleges in the United States, one was Harvard College founded in 1636, and the other was William Mary College, founded in 1693. These two colleges are very small in size and have a total of 5 teachers. 150 people were awarded 15 degrees. At that time, the United States was in the British colonial period, and higher education was not developed. Before the independence of the United States, only seven colleges were established. These new colleges have a strong religious color and are influenced by Harvard College. Although different, they retain the academic structure of the British universities at the same time.

With the independence of the United States in 1776 and the vigorous development of the “Westward Movement”, the College of Arts and Sciences also entered a period of high development, and there was a “college movement” in the history of American education. At that time, due to the limited restrictions on the conditions of the colleges and universities, some churches actively established many colleges to enhance the sectarian competitiveness and spread the gospel. The liberal arts college at that time was the product of a combination of national institutions, religious enthusiasm and civil power. By 1861, the United States had formed more than 800 colleges and was called the “country of the college.” These colleges are small, and the number of students enrolled is small, and most of them come from elite families. After graduation, students become new social elites. Therefore, the liberal arts colleges at that time were the leading elite universities.

1.2 College of Arts and Sciences in the university era

After the American Civil War, due to the unification of the country and the continuous prosperity of the political economy, some colleges were influenced by pragmatism, and began to question the liberal arts education philosophy and classical curriculum. Professional education began to sprout, and the German university model began to affect American higher education. Throughout the 19th century, the United States sent nearly 10,000 people to study and exchange in Germany. With the reference of German universities, a number of new universities were transformed and established, among which Johns Hopkins University and the University of Chicago are the most representative. Compared with the old-fashioned colleges, the new-style colleges pay attention to the emerging engineering technology in the subject setting, open the children of low-income families in the enrollment target, emphasize the scientific research and postgraduate education in education and teaching, and emphasize the service to the society in the idea of running

a school.

After the Second World War, the liberal arts colleges and universities experienced a large-scale differentiation after an unprecedented impact. Some developed into research universities or comprehensive universities, some of which were transformed into professional colleges, and some even canceled closure. By 1973, according to the classification of Carnegie's first edition of colleges and universities, there were 146 liberal arts colleges in the United States, accounting for 5.1% of all colleges and universities; there were 575 liberal arts colleges in the broad sense, accounting for the proportion of all universities. 20.3%". In the 2005 Carnegie Teaching Promotion Association higher education classification statistics, there were 287 American liberal arts colleges, accounting for 6.5% of higher education institutions, and enrolled 530,000, accounting for 3% of higher education enrollment. By 2010, there were 271 American liberal arts colleges, accounting for 5.8% of all colleges and universities. It can be seen from the changes in the classification standards of the American College of Arts and Sciences that the influence of pragmatism and professionalism on liberal arts colleges, although some colleges have applied applied majors, the award of bachelor degrees cannot exceed 50%, which is the difference between the current liberal arts colleges. An important symbol of a general or comprehensive bachelor's degree.

2. The characteristics of the American College of Arts and Sciences

Liberal Education in ancient Greece "is aimed at cultivating people with broad knowledge and elegance, so that students can get rid of vulgarity and awaken extraordinary." The core concept of liberal arts education in the Yale Report of 1828 is "Dedicated to the all-round development of students, dedicated to providing students with complete education, committed to laying a broad knowledge structure for students, and committed to training and equipping students' minds, that is, Say the use of knowledge to enrich the soul and expand its power". Jonathan Baker of Bard College in the United States believes that "modern liberal arts education is a higher education system established to cultivate students' desire to learn and train critical thinking, effective communication, and civic duty". Although the understanding of liberal arts education is different in different eras, in the Western educational thoughts, liberal arts education has always been orthodox, and the American College of Arts and Sciences has inherited and innovated liberal arts education in its development.

Most of the current liberal arts colleges still embody the essence of liberal arts education in the curriculum, teaching methods and management system. Emphasize that university education is not to teach a single subject knowledge or professional skills, but to provide students with a broad knowledge and inquiry spirit through a wide range of course content. The classification of the curriculum emphasizes the breadth and depth while emphasizing the expression of creativity, the use of interdisciplinary knowledge such as moral culture, historical value, mathematical reasoning, physical biology, social institutions and human behavior. by the first year of Pomona College is a fixed subject with a subject as the subject, guiding students to question existing facts and theories, and asking students to use oral language and written assignments. Clearly expressed to train students' reading, thinking, analysis, reasoning, summarizing and presentation skills. The school has at least 25 different subject topics for each semester. This kind of discussion class that breaks the boundaries of traditional disciplines enables students to cultivate their spirit of "not only on, not on books" and the courage to question and explore while improving their ability of perception, analysis, communication and writing.

3. Focus on undergraduate education

3.1 Positioning for undergraduate education

The orientation of the American College of Arts and Sciences is first and foremost a basic education at the undergraduate level. Most of the curriculum is the basic discipline of liberal arts, focusing on the cultivation and training of students' research ability. The vocational curriculum

involves very few. The purpose is to enable students to lay a solid foundation and create conditions for further study after graduation. The second is to pursue the all-round development of people. Pay attention to the cultivation of students' intellectual, psychological, physiological development and social responsibility consciousness. Freshmen do not emphasize professional or professional awareness when they enter school, do not special vocational education for a certain occupation, but focus on cultivating students' independent living, self-learning, and self-management skills. In the training goal, we still adhere to the concept of elite education, mainly aiming at cultivating leaders from all walks of life, and have a high degree of selectivity in enrollment. The school attaches great importance to the development of leadership and charity during the school, and provides them with a wide range of activities and leadership opportunities, so that each student can establish awareness and participation in public affairs during college.

3.2 Adherence to small-scale schooling

The small-scale school-running and low-teacher-study ratio is the premise of ensuring personalized education in the liberal arts college. It is also the advantage of the liberal arts college. To ensure the quality of undergraduate teaching, most college students are controlled between 8:1 and 12:1. Three-quarters of the colleges have fewer than 2,000 colleges, and the number of graduates per year is only 5% of the total number of graduates in the United States. Small-scale schooling provides each student with the opportunity to participate in the activities of the college to the maximum extent. It also creates a good academic atmosphere for the wide exchanges and interactions between teachers and students, stimulating students' enthusiasm and exploring the potential of students, and is conducive to promoting students. Comprehensive development. Just as the world-renowned economist EF Schumacher said in his book "Small is good", "extraordinary desire and strive for small-scale handyness, benefit from humanity and ease of management".

4. The enlightenment of American liberal arts college to China's higher education

4.1 Defining their own positioning and attaching importance to undergraduate education

After China's higher education entered the stage of popularization, a number of local undergraduate colleges and universities flourished. Although after 10 years of construction, the strength of running a school has grown significantly, but it is not a "good university" that people expect, and even "undergraduate training talents are not as good." The term "specialist". In addition, some colleges and universities are positioned to climb higher, seek bigger, still famous, and profit-seeking, and position themselves in teaching research, research teaching and research universities. While strengthening scientific research functions, undergraduate education is neglected. The development history of the American College of Arts and Sciences shows us the powerful vitality of the liberal arts education concept and reflects the long-term game between the liberal arts education tradition and professional education. Therefore, in order to win the social reputation and solve the problem of quality identification, China's higher education must pay attention to undergraduate education.

4.2 Adhere to the characteristics of running schools and innovate talent training mode

The characteristics of running a school are formed by a school in a long-term practice. It has distinct ideological, advanced, scientific and sTable characteristics. It is a prominent performance of the school's overall strength and school-running level. It is very important for the school's reform and development and talent cultivation process. Important role. The unique educational process and the unique educational effects produced by the American College of Arts and Sciences highlight the distinctive characteristics of running a school and the mode of training talents. These practical experiences have transformed the development of local universities in China, and explored the unique path of educating people. Important revelation.

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