

The a Priori Scholars

At an SMU student senate meeting last week, SMU President Dr. Willis Tate continued his praise of the Mustang athletic program, while

simultaneously taking a pot-shot at the Rice commerce department.

Ironically, this pattern of extolling the academic virtues of SMU athletes has been increasing in a ratio proportional to the decline of the school's football fortunes. In recent months, the SMU front office has led us to believe that the Ponies have done away with the double-standard scholarship requirements that have characterized Southwest Conference football for a number of years.

As proof, Dr. Tate cites the fact that prospective athletes must take College Board Examinations and are not allowed to enter special programs of physical education or commerce. Curiously, the score required of athletes on the C.E.E.B. has been omitted from Dr. Tate's praise! 'Tis almost as if the mere taking of the College Boards establishes one as a scholar .

Now, if SMU athletes must meet the same entrance requirements as non-athletes, and if there is no special program that these Saturday afternoon heroes can enter, it stands to reason that some would fall victim to the rigors of SMU academic life. Unfortunately, this has not been the case; SMU athletes seem no more prone to academic failure than those of other Southwest Conference schools. The transition from "big-time athletic program" to "SMU program" has been made with surprisingly little pain!

Unwittingly, Dr. Tate has blurred SMU's academic image. For if footballers must meet the same requirements as her students, and if none are flunking out, then her students aren't the scholars that we have been led to believe.

If Dr. Tate is sincere in his claim that SMU has placed athletics in a subordinate role, then we should expect to see Mr. Meek retained as head coach, since the emphasis upon winning football has been lessened. Mr. Meek's contract expires in the near future, and our guess is that Dr. Tate will have as much luck convincing hungry alumni as he has had convincing most of the rest of us.