

REPORT of the *ad hoc* Committee on Future Directions

**Bennington College
November, 1975**

Last spring, when the committee began to meet and correspond on a regular basis, we set about exploring future directions for Bennington without knowing whether we would reach consensus or would in the end put forward several alternative proposals. As we proceeded we discovered that virtually all of us agreed both on the defects of the college as it now operates and on the educational principles to which it should be held. The more we talked and exchanged informal position papers, the more we become convinced that what was needed (and what we wanted) was Bennington; not the Bennington of a mythic Golden Age, nor Bennington as we find it now in middle age, but a college dedicated to the principles that animated Bennington's founders. We realize that in deciding to reaffirm instead of starting over we have left ourselves open to criticism for failure of imagination, but we are convinced that the real

failure would be to lack the courage of our educational convictions and to minimize the differences between the college's current practices and its avowed principles.

By beginning with criticisms and then trying to articulate convictions, we hope to make it possible for others to enter into the processes by which we came to our conclusions. Because the committee was made up of individuals with very different concerns and degrees of connectedness with the college, we spent our first meetings talking about what Bennington is actually like today, and how its most serious problems might be defined. Had these problems seemed wholly financial in nature, we would have felt there was no point in gathering together a group of people primarily interested in education — and not budgets.

It did not take us long, however, to come to the conclusion that while the college's financial

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projections made it imperative to re-examine current commitments, there was reason to be concerned about the nature of these commitments even if money were no object. In the past, Bennington's periodic self-examinations have been occasioned by economic crises, yet this has not invalidated the educational concerns expressed. When we began our discussions many of us feared we would discover that our educational ideals could not be reconciled with economic realities. After having come to see more clearly what is (and is not) essential to the kind of education Bennington can and should offer, most of us now feel strongly that philosophy and necessity point the same future directions for the college.

We hope that the criticisms of current practices that follow will be read with this fundamental optimism in mind and will serve to clarify the reasoning behind our specific recommendations. Whatever may once have been true, we feel the college today has no clear sense of what it stands for and what it should be doing. This is, indeed, both a symptom and a cause of the present disarray: were there agreed-upon principles, there would be no need for a futures committee to reinvent Bennington. As things stand, however, we have felt the need to do precisely that, believing that any attempt to refurbish the college without substantially rethinking it will lead only to continued educational and financial drift.

The lack of effective consensus at the college is well exemplified by the extent to which the current divisions (Black Music, Dance, Drama, Literature and Languages, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Social Sciences, Visual Arts) have taken over major planning and policy-making functions. The divisions are now severally represented on the Faculty Educational Policies Committee; they have virtual control of student plans; they effectively determine how the instructional budget shall be spent; and they play a dominant role in the appointment and retention of faculty members. Less obviously, they also control the deliberations of the faculty insofar as issues raised in faculty meetings are perceived and resolved in terms of the impact a given policy will have on the operations of one or more of the divisions.

Divisionalism, as this pattern of behavior might be called, also plays a large role in shaping both course offerings and students' plans of study along narrow lines. In recent years faculty members and students have increasingly committed themselves, and thereby the college, to a professional or perhaps a vocational view of the curriculum. The term "professional" may seem inappropriate inasmuch as most faculty members are fully (even painfully) aware that they cannot duplicate the work of professional schools, nor even fully anticipate the demands of graduate training. But the *criterion* of professional training survives, if only as a standard the college does not quite meet, and it has made the last two years of college into a time for "majoring" rather than a time for becoming broadly educated. The fact that this pressure for pre-professional training comes during a period when professional jobs and opportunities for further professional education are in dramatically short supply underscores the anomaly of Bennington's current orientation. It seems ironic that students are being pressed to become narrower in their interests just when the marketplace seems to reinforce the college's long-standing convictions about the need to develop a plurality of intellectual and aesthetic capabilities.

One of the reasons this tendency has not been actively combated in recent years may be that many of the current practices of the college continue to draw upon original premises. It was formerly taken for granted that each student would move past the point of her original interests and toward a cluster of accomplishments that would identify her as an educated person. The premise was, of course, severely challenged in individual cases, but the Educational Counseling Committee (or rather its predecessor committees) retained the right to insist that each student devise and follow a warrantable path to the degree. Hence Tentative Plans for Advanced Work as well as the importance attached to counseling.

More recently, however, the college has largely abandoned the right to shape student programs except as they may conceivably be influenced by the degree requirements adopted in 1969. Perhaps the best thing that can be said for these requirements is that they seem to be entirely perfunctory; certainly they do not seriously infringe on the freedom of student choice prized at Bennington from the earliest years. But as long as this choice is understood simply as freedom to follow one's interests, without anything being said about what it means to be genuinely educated, minimal requirements operate in fact to reinforce the hegemony of the divisions and the narrowness of divisional majors. The committee is convinced that the college must take a stand against this negative definition of student freedom as well as against divisional authority and must assert that an educated person needs something more than a smattering of "distribution" and a protracted period of "majoring."

To put things more positively, we have come to share a conviction that any education worth the name must represent a variety of ways of perceiving reality. In our judgment, students need to be made aware of several lines of study in order to expand their range, develop their capabilities, and discover their limits, as well as the limits of different modes of perception. Therefore the curriculum must be designed to reaffirm the claims of widely different ways of dealing with reality. We believe it would be disastrous to allow architecture to shape the commitments of the college and to mistake newly specialized facilities in the arts for a mandate to become an art school. On the contrary, we think it is time to reassert the significance of a college where the tension between the arts and the more traditional liberal arts is honored on the grounds that an effectively educated person must possess a variety of resources for dealing with the world. No college education can be expected to supply all of the necessary resources in equal or even sufficient measure, yet none deserves the name unless it opens the possibility and conveys the need while initiating the process of acquisition.

In short, we do not believe that a committee — or a college for that matter — can predict what students will need to know 25 or 30 years from now. But we do not, on the other hand, think it is possible to ignore that future in the interest of the convenience of the college or of current faculty members and students. Every care must be taken to ensure that students be exposed to a range of questions in a variety of contexts in order to increase their ability to deal actively and decisively with real problems. It seems as indefensible to imply that the business of Bennington College is to turn out lit majors or lighting designers as it is to assert (as the new vocationalists do) that the real business of higher education in the United States is to train the dental hygienists and keypunch operators of tomorrow. The reasons people of college age have for attending Bennington must be quite broad — they must have to do with

preparation for life, not a specific job. And that in turn is why it is so important that students' active engagement in the process of learning be encouraged, and variety be reflected in individual students' programs as well as the college catalogue.

The tendency to overspecialization is abetted by the attitudes many students bring to Bennington. All too often they come from an environment in which they have only prepared for college — in which all of their training has been predicated on the assumption that first they must learn everything they need to know, and later they will be permitted to apply it. So, too, many spend their time in college as if it were a waystation on the road to the business of life; as if preparation for life were one thing and life itself another. In our view, however, it is neither possible nor desirable to make such distinctions. Rather, a student's learning consists of whatever he is able to do at any given moment, and the chief function of the formal educational apparatus (be it an institution, a course, or a given day's assignment) is to encourage him to build on what he knows.

We are convinced that the kind of preparation Bennington can provide in introducing students to various modes of analysis and expression is far more important for most careers than the "coverage" that large university departments offer. Moreover we feel that the college's high attrition rate, so far from being an embarrassment, reflects both the independence of the students and a readiness — which if anything should be increased — to acknowledge that there are things well worth doing that are not done at Bennington. While praising the discriminating quality of the students, it would seem wise to reassert that the college itself has discriminated between known goods in deciding which things it will teach and teach well.

Last summer one of the committee members circulated Alfred North Whitehead's admonitions about education, admonitions which summarize our sense of what Bennington College's pedagogical commitments should be:

Above all things we must beware of what I call "inert ideas" — that is to say, ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilized or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations. We enunciate two educational commandments, "do not teach too many subjects," and again "what you teach, teach thoroughly." The result of teaching small parts of a large number of subjects is the passive reception of disconnected ideas, not illuminated with any spark of vitality.

In my own work at universities I have been much struck by the paralysis of thought induced in pupils by the aimless accumulation of precise knowledge, inert and unutilized. It should be the chief aim of a university professor to exhibit himself in his own true character — that is, as an ignorant man thinking, actively utilizing his small share of knowledge....The details of knowledge which are important will be picked up *ad hoc* in each avocation of life, but the habit of the active utilization of well-understood principles is the final possession of wisdom.

We would supplement "well-understood principles" with a phrase that suggests what is involved in pursuing a disciplined creativity in the arts, but we feel it is less important to quarrel with Whitehead's wording than to understand his intention, which reinforces our belief that Bennington's continued vitality depends upon reasserting its distinctive pedagogical commitment.

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Such a statement of principle is virtually a truism, but our observation of the life of the college suggests it is a point worth making in opposition both to the proliferation of courses, often hierarchically conceived as "introductory," "intermediate," and "advanced," and to students' insistence on a freedom to do only what they already know how to do. The former implies that it is the chief business of the student to fit himself to the curriculum, the latter that it is the chief business of the curriculum to fit itself to the student, whereas we feel that the relationship between student and curriculum (or between student and "field") should, in effect, be renegotiated every day in the classroom, laboratory, and studio. It is the teacher, of course, who is crucial in this process, not the size of the class, the absence of examinations, or any of the other shibboleths of a Bennington education. Small classes may make it possible to engage students more actively in the educational process; papers or performances may be the natural outgrowths of that active engagement. But arrangements in themselves are no substitute for a teacher who is able to provoke students into being able to do what he himself does.

It is the conviction that students must learn by doing that has created our urgent sense that the college itself must do what it says and shape its processes to convey a coherent philosophy of education. Simply repeating the words of the founders or of Dewey or Whitehead is not enough; indeed serious discussion is no substitute for structural change. That is the reason we have not talked about counseling in this report; even the best personal advice will count for little unless it is reinforced by the practices of the institution as a whole. In the past, questions about the health of the college have frequently been answered "if only, counseling were working," when the point, it seems to us, is to make the college as a whole work.

By not confronting educational issues squarely the college has lost some measure of its distinctiveness; by failing to face the financial implications of past commitments Bennington must now address the very issue of survival. Only if the college visibly demonstrates that it knows what it is doing, that it knows how to do it, and that it does not intend to drift into an uncertain future but rather to make difficult choices now, can it continue to attract the faculty members, students, and financial support necessary to ensure that Bennington continues to be an educational experiment of real significance.

Because the recommendations that follow all grow out of a single set of educational premises, it has been difficult to know the best way of ordering them. A table of contents is printed at the top of the next column, but we hope that anyone reading the report will go through all of the recommendations before deciding what he thinks of them. Just as we have insisted on looking at the college as a whole, we have tried to draft a document that is something more than the sum of its parts.

Student programs

Students must have the freedom to structure their own academic programs, but they must do so within a set of expectations that they will explore more than one field (or group of closely related fields) in depth. The college's decision to return to a policy of no grades suggests a renewed commitment to the idea that students should be encouraged to take risks in educating themselves and to move beyond their special interests and competencies. We feel that the college's degree requirements should be reshaped to reinforce this proposition.

Certainly the current requirements for graduation seem perfunctory; distribution requirements of the course-counting sort would seem to encourage only dilettantism insofar as they have any effect at all. Instead we feel that the college should clearly identify a diverse number of ways of viewing the world and ask that each

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degree student achieve genuine proficiency in two or more of them. We therefore propose that all students be expected to do advanced work in two of the following five areas: the performing arts, the visual arts, literature, natural sciences, and social sciences, with the further understanding that they are not to choose fields that overlap, but rather to investigate two disparate modes. For example, according to this scheme advanced work in dance and in painting, or in history and literature, would not satisfy the requirement for a degree. This is not to say that students could not work simultaneously in these paired disciplines or even produce a senior project based on work in both of them, but they would also be expected to do advanced work in another discipline of a distinctly different nature.

In addition we propose that every degree candidate be expected to complete a senior project or participate in a special senior tutorial (for example, in the natural sciences). We favor continuing to require that sophomores, or at the latest first-term juniors, be required to submit proposed plans of study complete with an explanation of their intentions, and that this explanation be sanctioned by the signatures of four faculty members, two from each of the major areas in which the students intend to do advanced work. The students' plans together with the attestations of their sponsors that they are (or will be) capable of working on the advanced level, would then go directly to the Educational Counseling Committee. There the proposals would be scrutinized in terms both of the overall quality of the students' work and of the range and coherence of the plans themselves. "Majoring" as it has come to be known at Bennington — that is, acceptance into a particular division — would no longer take place. Rather, all students would be expected to do serious work in two very different fields and to conclude their studies with a sustained piece of work in at least one of them.

We realize that the proposed scheme will run directly counter to the convictions or convenience of a number of students. To them we would stress that in return for pursuing advanced work in two very different areas they will be freed from the present requirement of gaining entrance to a division — of majoring in the conventional sense. Those who are capable of pursuing advanced work without a great deal of prior preparation will be able to do just that, and students will be in the position of satisfying two faculty members in each of two divisions rather than having to satisfy an entire division. It is our hope in this way to restore

the sense that learning is not a matter of "coverage" but has to do with the development of disciplined habits of mind and body through the effective collaboration of students and particular faculty members.

Special students

We further realize that there will be students whose interests are so specialized that this plan will not fit their needs. Therefore, we believe that the college, while stating more clearly what is expected of the degree candidate, should at the same time actively encourage the enrollment of individuals who are not interested in degrees, but who are able to make persuasive representations to the effect that a period of time spent at Bennington would make sense in relation to their own expressed purposes. In other words, instead of bending degree requirements to accommodate all worthy comers, the college should encourage those with worthy but highly specialized interests to enroll along with degree candidates.

We believe there would be advantages to having a significantly enlarged special student category quite apart from our wish to relieve the pressure to trivialize requirements for the degree. We would welcome the idea of having students of different ages on campus, including alumni interested in coming back to Bennington to work with specific faculty members or on special projects. We also see in this proposal the possibility of diversifying the student body in other ways. With a regular policy of accepting special students the college might actively recruit students from very different kinds of institutions for a junior year at Bennington. Students who could not afford four years, or whom we could not support for that span, might profit from a shorter period at the college. Furthermore, appeals for gifts to aid such special students should attract support from benefactors who now express doubts about supporting a "school for the rich."

We would suggest that a small group of administrators and faculty members be asked to make specific recommendations as to how best to implement this proposal, and that in the course of their deliberations they seriously consider the advantages of some sort of voucher scheme whereby those interested in two-to-four-term programs could purchase prepaid nontransferable vouchers, retaining the option of expending them at times of their own choosing.

The divisions

The changes we propose in the design and administration of student programs lead inevitably to a reconsideration of the manner in which the college should conceive of its faculty divisions. In brief, we propose that the faculty be grouped into divisions that correspond to the five major areas in which students are expected to work. We assume that sub-sections of these five large divisions may well meet together to discuss matters peculiar to them, but that they would require the approval of the larger body when they shape educational policies such as the curriculum and the allocation of faculty time. This arrangement should help to alleviate some of the problems of divisionalism, not to say the difficulties involved in utilizing the new buildings well. In any case it would reflect the institution's commitment to remaining a liberal arts college rather than a cluster of would-be professional schools located on a college campus.

Definition of faculty positions Recruitment of faculty

If Bennington is no longer to aim at coverage and the criteria of graduate and professional training are not to determine its curriculum, the college must find means to develop a faculty that will reflect the pluralism of its educational commitments. Therefore we recommend that in the future every faculty position to fall vacant should, in effect, become the possession of the Faculty Educational Policies Committee. That is, instead of

assuming that current definitions of faculty slots hold unless challenged, all vacancies should be liable to redefinition or elimination.

We conceive that a necessary corollary to this assertion of the FEPC's hegemony over the allocation of positions is the assertion of the college's interest (as distinct from the interest of subgroups) in the hiring process itself. The decision last year to ask two members of the FEPC to read folders and interview candidates in conjunction with the activities of divisional search committees seems a step in the right direction. We would advocate going still further to establish an *ad hoc* search committee for every vacancy. Several faculty members whose professional interests are closest to those of the pool of possible candidates would as a matter of course be members of the committee. But their perspectives would be supplemented by several other individuals (including at least one member of the FEPC as well as student representatives) who could scrutinize the candidates from the point of view of related disciplines. In other words all those involved in the search process would be committed to certain standards of quality; their variousness would be expressed in terms of their view of the connections particular candidates might or might not be able to make with colleagues in other fields.

While believing that there are no shortcuts to discovering what is in the interest of the college as a whole, we feel sure that by combining discussion with long-range planning, staffing decisions in the future need not be any more time-consuming than they are now. The alternative to the restructuring we propose would seem to be endless discussions of possible tradeoffs between divisions.

Faculty contracts

We believe that a college committed to experimentation and educational pluralism cannot afford to have a teaching staff that is primarily or even substantially composed of people who expect to spend 25 or 30 years in residence. By "afford" we are not referring to costs in the financial sense. Indeed the stipulation that no faculty member shall be paid more than twice as much as any other, in combination with inflation (which has meant that new faculty members are hired at salary levels their predecessors only recently achieved), and a faculty housing policy which mandates that the college charge newer faculty members lower rents while making more of this subsidized housing available to them, taken together mean that the difference between what faculty members on three-year contracts and those on subsequent contracts cost the college is generally quite small. Instead, by "afford" we are referring to the hidden costs involved in the fact that for many faculty members the college has come to represent a steady job rather than a personal experiment.

We recognize that alterations in the contract system in themselves will not bring about a new definition of what it means to teach at Bennington. But unless the policy of presumptive tenure is changed, we believe the process of redefinition will be virtually impossible. Just as students should be asked to make (and remake) decisions about what they are studying and whether Bennington is the place to pursue that study, we feel that faculty members should be expected to re-examine their own choices regularly. And just as the college does not guarantee graduation when accepting a student, so in appointing faculty members it should not be in the position of guaranteeing, or seeming to guarantee, long-term employment.

The idea that some sort of tenure system is necessary as a bulwark against the violation of faculty members' civil liberties seems to us to ignore several decades of legislative history as well as to underestimate the ways in which due process can be protected by college policy. Therefore, it seems important to distinguish between the objectives that tenure was historically intended to meet and the means that were chosen to meet them. If after investigation individual rights to due process and non-discriminatory treatment

do not seem to be fully guaranteed by federal codes and college policies, we recommend that an agreement be drafted to provide these protections. In any case we feel that it would be a mistake to rely on specific contractual provisions to guarantee employees' rights when these provisions do not apply equally to all employees.

On the other hand we feel that there are specific things that any faculty contract system should do. First, it should provide for the regular review of individual faculty members according to clearly stipulated procedures. Second, it should make it possible for the college regularly to reassess its educational commitments. And third, it should focus on protecting faculty members in the early stages of their careers when they need time to complete significant projects and establish a professional reputation, instead of providing long-term job security.

Our recommendations for restructuring the contract system are as follows:

(a) An initial three-year contract with a review in the second semester of the second year. We anticipate that this review would correspond to current initial reviews insofar as attention would focus on the faculty member's effectiveness within the college community — how well does he/she teach; how well does he/she function as a colleague?

(b) A second three-year contract, again with review in the second semester of the second year. At this juncture special attention should be given to whether the faculty member in question is engaged in substantial independent work of the kind that could be best developed were he/she able to count on a substantial number of additional years at Bennington. As in the previous review, effectiveness as a teacher and colleague would be carefully scrutinized, but the college would presumably also want to have supporting evidence from individuals outside the immediate Bennington community to the effect that in the eyes of professional colleagues the faculty member under review was embarked on a significant project or set of projects.

We believe that this expectation is very different from the publish-or-perish pressure put on junior faculty at many institutions. Rather it represents an attempt by the college to protect faculty members beginning their artistic or academic careers and necessarily undertaking certain risks in the process, by providing them with a working environment in which to make their professional marks.

(c) A seven-year contract with review in the second half of the fifth year. At this point the primary concern would change from protecting promising faculty members to preserving the vitality of the college itself. In order to ensure that a substantial number of positions are regularly liable to redefinition, while at the same time allowing for the continuity that a small number of invaluable faculty members can provide, the question asked would be, in effect, whether the person being reviewed is irreplaceable. Moreover there should be a clearly expressed expectation that at most one-quarter of those who reach this third review will be retained. This does not mean that one out of four candidates will automatically be retained; the challenge will not be to establish one's relative worth but to prove one's unique excellence. Therefore we do not believe that we are asking Bennington to replicate the implicit quota systems which exist in most colleges and universities by virtue of the limited number of tenured positions. We recognize that these quotas have the effect of encouraging young faculty members to compete directly with each other, often by publishing prematurely and not daring to take on truly challenging projects.

(d) A series of seven-year contracts would then be offered these few exceptional individuals. In the fifth year of each seven-year contract

they would be subject to the same kind of review that is mandated at the present time for those on presumptive tenure, with one difference: the sentence in the faculty handbook that reads

When a faculty member is offered his first five-year contract, or any subsequent five-year contract, the College thereby commits itself to offer another five-year contract at the termination of the one then being served unless it can be demonstrated by the College that the contribution to College life of the faculty member concerned has markedly deteriorated or that he has substantially failed to perform the terms of his contract, or unless financial exigency or a change of educational policy requires the elimination of his teaching position,

should be amended to convey clearly that it is not simply gross negligence but lack of continued teaching effectiveness or loss of professional edge that will be regarded as cause for non-renewal.

The proposal as outlined opens the possibility of hiring mature professionals, those who are obviously engaged in significant independent work, on an initial seven-year contract (instead of an initial three). In the committee's opinion, five years' experience of an individual's work should give the college enough time to evaluate him for "permanent" appointment, thereby avoiding difficulties that have arisen in the past when it seemed necessary either to truncate the probationary period or to ignore a candidate's manifest achievements.

The question of how to integrate current faculty members into the new system is obviously a complicated one. The committee would hope that the process of transition could be accomplished as quickly as possible and be shaped by a sense of equity. In any case we would not anticipate violating current contracts, nor giving those on presumptive tenure less than a two-year "buffer" between a review and the expiration of their contracts.

The committee would anticipate little difficulty in shifting those currently on three-year contracts to the new system; the integration of those on five-year contracts is more problematical. Current contracts might be extended to give each faculty member with presumptive tenure the equivalent of an initial seven-year contract under the new system. (For example, a faculty member with three years left on a current five-year contract might be given an additional four years with the understanding that two years from now, that is, five years into this new seven-year contract, he would be reviewed under the new system.) At this point, which also might be reached by regarding the last year of a current five-year contract as the year of review and guaranteeing two more years if renewal was not granted, the faculty member in question would be subject to the stipulation that no more than one person in four would receive a second seven-year contract.

Still another option would be to regard all faculty members with presumptive tenure as currently on second seven-year contracts and to review them according to the stipulations that apply to those already declared "indispensable" under the new system. This option raises the question of equity between those currently with and without presumptive tenure, for one group would, in effect, be held to a much higher standard than the other. In any case it is our feeling that a special committee composed of both faculty members and trustees would have to be set up to formulate in precise language the proposal we have outlined and to iron out the problems of implementation.

Financial projections

A newly coherent sense of what Bennington College stands for must be accompanied by a financial plan based upon realistic projections. The figures that follow are necessarily based on a series of assumptions, and therefore do not in any

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simple sense speak for themselves. We believe that the most useful way of presenting projections in this report is to summarize major alternatives and follow them with our specific recommendations, putting more detailed figures in an appendix (See back cover).

In 1975-76 the college's operating budget (exclusive of financial aid, debt service, and summer program expenses) is \$3,862,000. In 1979-80, assuming an annual increase of 7.5 per cent, the operating budget will be \$5,158,000. The 7.5 per cent represents an educated guess based on past experience, an estimated 10 per cent annual increase in fixed costs (food, fuel, electricity), and an estimated 5 per cent to 6 per cent average increase in total salary budgets.

If we turn from these expenses to look at income, we can predict revenues from such miscellaneous sources as faculty rents, the snack bar, application fees, and the early childhood center. In 1975-76 we are projecting an income of \$167,000 from these sources, leaving \$3,695,000 to be covered by some combination of comprehensive fees, endowment income, annual giving, and — possibly — income from the summer program. In addition, these sources of money must be drawn upon to cover annual debt service (\$326,000) and financial aid (\$322,000 in 1975-76). Four years from now, if we assume "business as usual," we might expect to have \$196,000 in offsetting income or, in other words, an operating expense of \$4,961,500 to be covered by some combination of comprehensive fees, income from endowment, annual giving, and summer programs. In addition we would need to cover an annual debt service of \$326,000 as well as the financial aid budget.

One way of establishing a financial aid figure is to assume the continuation of the current trustee policy of allocating to aid between 9 per cent and 10 per cent of the total monies that would be realized if all students paid the full comprehensive fee. But in order to discover that figure it is first necessary to establish what the comprehensive fee would be, and that calculation, in turn, is based on certain assumptions. If we assume that the comprehensive fee should be adjusted to cover operating expenses (exclusive of income from auxiliary enterprises) then the fee schedule would look like this: \$6,700 in 1976-77, \$7,200 in 1977-78, \$7,750 in 1978-79, and \$8,350 in 1979-80. If, on the other hand, we assume that it will not be possible to raise the comprehensive fee by more than 5 per cent each year for the next four years if the college is to be fully enrolled, then the cost in 1979-80 to each student not on financial aid would be \$7,650. If we then count on 595 students, the financial aid budget would be approximately \$450,000 under the first set of assumptions (comprehensive fee to cover operating expenses) and \$410,000 under the second (5 per cent increase annually).

Of course it would also be possible to peg financial aid to some other figure; if we assume that it like other costs should increase 7.5 per cent annually then the total aid budget in 1979-80 would be \$430,000. If instead we assume that this portion of the total budget should increase more rapidly than other expenses, or that it must increase more rapidly if the college is to continue to be fully enrolled, then the total cost might be substantially higher, perhaps over half a million dollars.

If the comprehensive fee is tied to uncovered operating expenses, then we would have to carry \$447,000 in financial aid plus \$326,000 in debt service, or a total of \$773,000 by some combination of endowment income, annual giving, and possible summer income. Alternatively, if the comprehensive fee is only \$7,650, we would have to cover \$410,000 in financial aid, \$326,000 in debt service, and \$410,000 in operating deficit, for a total of \$1,146,000.

If we assume that unrestricted annual giving will continue to grow at a rate of 10 per cent each year, an assumption which may be jeopardized by the state of the economy as well as the need for a concurrent capital fund program, we would expect to realize \$365,000 from this source in 1980,

leaving a \$408,000 deficit to be covered by endowment and summer programs, or — if the comprehensive fee is to be subsidized — a deficit of \$781,000.

At this point the college has approximately \$3,500,000 in endowment or funds acting as endowment. That sum, were it to remain intact, would generate \$175,000 if we count on a 5 per cent yield (as we have in recent years), or \$245,000 at 7 per cent. In short, if the college is able to keep its annual inflation rate well below national indices and charge \$8,350 in 1979-80 and increase annual giving 10 per cent annually and keep the current endowment intact and earn 7 per cent on investments, then it would have a deficit of only \$163,000 to be covered by summer income and capital gifts. If it were as lucky in the summer program as everything else it might hope to clear \$100,000 in 1979-80, leaving the development office and trustees with the task of raising just under \$1,000,000 to carry the remaining \$63,000 in deficit.

The members of the futures committee find it impossible to be so optimistic. Certainly each of the assumptions in the preceding paragraph could be questioned. Leaving aside the difficulty of keeping the college's internal rate of inflation well below the national figures, it seems unrealistic to count on raising the comprehensive fee dramatically. On the other hand, keeping the fee down to an annual increase of 5 per cent would lead to an insupportable deficit unless operating expenses were greatly reduced. On balance we are willing to count on marked increases in unrestricted annual giving, but we find it hard to imagine that the \$3,500,000 currently acting as endowment will remain intact. Indeed it seems much safer to assume that close to \$1,000,000 of that total will be spent over the next four years to finish paying the contractor and carry some portion of the debt service. Even the most successful capital fund program is not likely to have an immediate impact on the budget because pledges are often made several years before payment is received.

Turning to the question of income from capital, in the past the finance committee of the trustees has agreed to a 5 per cent figure. Their reasons are sufficiently technical not to be elaborated here. Although we would recommend that they investigate the possibility of increasing earnings to 7 per cent we would hesitate to count on that 2 per cent increment if it meant sacrificing long-range earnings to short-term needs.

We further think it would be a mistake to count on the summer program to do more than offset some of the additional expenses attendant on maintaining the new Arts Center, expenses which may not be manageable within the projected 7.5 per cent inflation figure. Beyond that, any income from the program over the next four years might be expected to minimize the drain on endowment funds, but it would not have a major impact on operating expenses.

Financial recommendations

Because the members of the committee feel strongly that the college cannot rely on a series of fortunate accidents to ensure its survival, we are recommending that three major steps be taken: (1) that the comprehensive fee be set to cover operating costs (not including financial aid); (2) that a major capital fund program be inaugurated; (3) that in order to keep the comprehensive fee from rising too rapidly and to avoid having to set unrealistic capital goals, the size of the teaching staff be reduced to realize a savings of \$225,000 in 1975-76 dollars, bringing the student-faculty ratio to 9.7:1.

Raising the comprehensive fee

In the first two decades of its history, the college had a policy of charging those students who could afford it the full cost of their Bennington education. The idea was not simply to avoid deficits, but to concentrate on subsidizing students who actually

needed aid. This was, and is, in sharp contrast to the policies of the great majority of colleges, where income from endowment is spent to keep fees well below actual per-student costs. Bennington has never had a large enough endowment to make this a serious temptation. On the other hand, the college has, in effect, been subsidizing all of its students by not charging anyone a truly comprehensive fee.

Several members of the committee felt strongly that if students who could afford to pay were not willing to cover the costs of a Bennington education it would be a sure sign that the college did not deserve to survive. Others were eager to stress that as long as all students were subsidized to some degree the money available for those with financial need would necessarily be severely limited. They were concerned about providing for a more diversified student body and felt that the college would be in a much better position to pay for this diversity if fund-raising efforts, or a major portion of them, could be focused on financial aid.

The committee feels that instead of trying to achieve an uneasy compromise each year between a fear of deficits and a fear that the college will price itself out of the market, trustees should formally reinstate the policy of charging full costs. One advantage of this policy, in addition to the obvious financial benefits, would be that all members of the college community could see the relationship between increasing operating costs (for whatever reason) and the need to increase student fees. Moreover we feel that the policy could be of great help in the college's development program. Instead of asking alumni and friends for unrestricted annual giving in order to paint buildings and pay salaries, it would be possible to allocate every dollar of annual giving to support students with financial need. And, finally, it would be possible to show major donors that their capital gifts would not be eroded by annual deficits. In short, the college would be able to encourage restricted giving for well defined purposes instead of presenting itself to the outside world as an institution with an insatiable appetite for other people's capital.

Inaugurating a capital program

While the committee believes it will be necessary for the college to launch a major capital program within the next 12 to 18 months, we do not feel that fund raising in itself is an alternative to raising the comprehensive fee or cutting operating costs. The college's ability to raise money will depend in the future on its ability to show that every reasonable effort has been made to control operating expenses and to cover them with annual income. We further believe it is crucially important to be realistic about how much money Bennington can hope to raise in capital gifts over the next four to five years.

The implications of not cutting the operating budget by \$225,000 in 1975-76 dollars (or \$285,000 in 1979-80 dollars) have already been outlined in terms of the comprehensive fee. Here we would like to add that we believe it would be entirely unrealistic to expect to raise enough new money by 1979-80 to endow the debt service, the gap between the actual financial aid budget and annual giving, and an operating deficit of \$285,000 (assuming a comprehensive fee of \$7,850). If the college is able to keep intact \$3,000,000 of the current endowment, then it would need to raise approximately \$6,500,000 at 7 per cent (\$10,250,000 at 5 per cent) to cover this amount. In contrast, if the operating budget were to be reduced by \$285,000 from our business-as-usual projections, only approximately \$2,500,000 at 7 per cent (\$4,500,000 at 5 per cent) would be needed over the next four to five years.

These figures are, of course, not exact. Major gifts early in the capital program would reduce the total need. It should also be pointed out that the figures quoted are minimal and reflect need in the most limited sense — the need to avoid deficits. In setting long-range development goals the college

would clearly want to go beyond covering deficits to fund new ventures and support current commitments more adequately.

Reducing non-instructional expense

Put most simply, the question raised by the preceding section of the report might be "Why can't \$285,000 be found in the maintenance budget, in administrative overhead, anywhere but in faculty salaries?" There are several ways of addressing this query, among them comparing Bennington's current manner of allocating its resources with that of other colleges, particularly those that make similar educational claims, in the interest of discovering where Bennington may be spending too much. More importantly, there are internal figures to look at in order to discover what has been done already to cut non-instructional costs and whether further savings might be realized.

Comparative figures come in two general forms. First we can compare student-faculty ratios, a lamentably simple-minded way of talking about education, but still a means of discovering whether Bennington's expenditures may be out of line in comparison with those of similar colleges. At the moment the college's ratio (which includes only regular faculty members and is adjusted so that two half-time faculty members count as one) is just over 8:1. Similar figures are available for institutions that we might regard as comparable. At Sarah Lawrence the figure is already over 9:1, at Williams and Reed it is 12:1, at Hampshire it is 16:1. A reduction of just over 15 per cent in total faculty size would bring us to 9.7:1. A ratio of this sort will almost certainly be as luxurious in 1979-80 as 8:1 is today. In short, we would still be among the very few colleges with a student-faculty ratio of better than 10:1.

Another more useful way of looking at comparable figures is to examine how different colleges allocate per-student costs: what do they spend their money on? According to recent calculations, one of Bennington's closest competitors — competitors that is for students — a college with the same expressed educational concerns, has a per-student cost (exclusive of debt service) of approximately \$5,900, which it spends as follows:

\$2,400 on administration (which includes food services, health services, student services, library, and general administration);

\$1,700 on instruction (faculty salaries and benefits, departmental budgets);

\$500 on financial aid, and

\$1,300 on maintenance.

Comparable figures for Bennington would be \$6,000 total cost per student,

\$2,200 on administration;

\$2,500 on instruction;

\$550 on financial aid, and

\$1,350 on maintenance.

One thing these figures clearly suggest is that economies of scale in the areas of administration and maintenance are chimerical: the other college is twice as large. Moreover, their physical plant is much newer and equipped with modern thermostats and other amenities Bennington must do without. A comparison based on percentages will show even more clearly where the patterns of expenditure differ. Whereas Bennington spends 33 per cent of its per-student cost on administration and 38 per cent on instruction, the other college spends 40.5 per cent on administration and 29 per cent on instruction. Both institutions spend another 8.5 per cent of the total on financial aid, while they spend slightly more on maintenance, 22 per cent as opposed to 20.5 per cent. These figures strongly suggest that Bennington's current expenditures, while admirable in the priorities they reflect, are out of line in comparison with an institution that prospective students find quite similar. Indeed, the gap between the two colleges' comprehensive fees, roughly represented in the total per-student costs, is the result of Bennington's investment in instruction.

Nevertheless, in coming to the conclusion that certain reductions in total faculty size are defensible and indeed necessary, the members of the committee concentrated not on comparable figures, but on the record of recent attempts to hold down other kinds of costs. Certain expenses have skyrocketed in recent years. Since 1972-73, despite savings of approximately 30 per cent on the actual consumption of fuel oil, the college's oil bills have gone up nearly 300 per cent. In the same period, despite the large-scale buying power of Seilers, food costs have gone up 50 per cent. Bennington's controllable expenses are in fact salaries, and the economies in this area can be summarized without going into excessive detail; anyone who is employed by the college will know at first hand how painful these economies have been.

Up until now, cost cutting efforts have been concentrated on reducing staff in non-instructional areas. While food costs rose 50 per cent, total expenditures on wages for non-student food service workers has actually been reduced by eliminating positions. Moreover, in the last several years there has been an 18 per cent reduction in the number of union positions and a 25 per cent reduction in non-union positions in maintenance. Whenever possible these reductions have been accomplished by means of normal attrition, but that has not always been feasible. If all of the clerical and administrative positions in the college are considered together (excluding union positions in maintenance and food services, where major reductions have already been noted) the average annual increase in these salaries between 1972-73 and 1975-76 has been 2.8 per cent. Comparable figures for the faculty salary budget reflect an average annual increase of 6.4 per cent in the same period.

The figures in themselves suggest that it would be extremely difficult to realize substantial savings, indeed any savings at all, in the area of non-instructional salaries. The gap between what an administrator at Bennington College is paid and what he or she might expect to be paid elsewhere is large and, ever increasing. The difficulty of recruiting replacements in these positions is very real. Moreover the number of administrators is so small compared with the number of faculty members that both faculty members and students would have to do without important services in order to realize savings of even 3 or 4 per cent. They would also have to assume the work of these administrators, most of whom are paid significantly less than the average faculty member and are expected to work a 12-month year. Nor could clerical workers, who are paid less than half as much as the average faculty member, be significantly reduced in number; they provide the backup necessary to carry out the college's educational principles, whether in admissions, student services, or the Dean of Studies office. In short, it does not seem plausible to think of shrinking administrative overhead significantly, attractive as that idea may at first seem to other constituencies in the college.

The committee strongly recommends that every effort continue to be made to reduce the total number of non-teaching positions at the college, but we do not believe that these reductions will in themselves offset the need to reduce teaching staff. At best we anticipate that cutting the total number of positions in administration, maintenance, food services, and clerical services will help to keep the overall budget from growing at an annual rate of more than 7.5 per cent and will make it possible to replace current staff when necessary by enabling the college gradually to raise its non-faculty pay scale and to redefine current positions in order to be able to compete for well-qualified people.

Maintaining size of student body

Even if the difficulty of realizing substantial savings in non-instructional expense is granted, a further question emerges. Why not dilute the student-faculty ratio by adding students rather than

by cutting faculty positions? The members of the committee think that this idea is implausible. In order to realize an additional \$285,000 in income in 1979-80 the college would have to admit 40 additional students. Here we are assuming a comprehensive fee of \$7,850 and the same proportion of students on financial aid as at present. If instead we assumed that the college would have to spend more on scholarships in order to fill a larger class, an increase that those closest to the admissions operation have frequently suggested would be necessary, then the college would, of course, have to admit more than 40 students to realize the requisite income.

There is no evidence that the local housing market could absorb 40 additional students; the college almost certainly would have to provide dormitory space, whether by buying property in North Bennington or building one or more new houses. In either case it would incur additional capital expense as well as maintenance costs, thereby offsetting some portion of the gains made by diluting the student-faculty ratio. But speculations about housing are far less important than the simple fact that there is nothing in the college's admissions statistics or those of comparable institutions to make us feel that it would be wise to count on enrolling more than 595 students in any given year.

To be sure enrollment is somewhat over that figure this fall, but not because of new students clamoring to get in. More former students elected to return in September than the Dean's office had anticipated. In other words, the admissions figures do not reflect an increasing market but a good captive market; a number of students already committed to Bennington decided to complete their work for the degree sooner rather than later. If the college is fortunate it will continue to have occasional terms with more than 595 students, but the money generated thereby will simply slow the drain on current endowment, not offset substantial deficits.

We feel that it is vitally important that Bennington not find itself in the position of having to take every student who can pay, and to our way of thinking enlarging the student body would be the surest way of hastening that unhappy day. Our conviction on this point does not grow out of an attachment to selectivity for its own sake. Certainly the self-selective process that leads good students to apply is more important to the college than any subsequent judgments made by the admissions office. But Bennington's freedom to stand for a distinctive view of higher education is dependent upon minimizing pressures to compromise in the interest of filling beds. The college should not seek to be all things to all people, but rather to be something very significant in the lives of some people. And just as selectivity about what is to be taught is one means to that end, so selectivity about who is to be taught is another.

Reducing teaching staff

In the end, of course, arguments which concentrate on savings to the college, even if they are so forceful as to suggest that a reduction in faculty size will help to preserve the institution, do not address the question of whether what is to be kept alive is a significant educational enterprise. The impact of proposed cuts can be assessed only in terms of specific recommendations for reallocating faculty positions; both guidelines and illustrations are needed. But first it seems appropriate to go back and be more specific about the decision-making process as the committee sees it.

Clearly trustees have an obligation to set total figures for the number of faculty members, an obligation which grows directly out of their fiduciary responsibilities. In addition we feel that they should articulate their sense of the college's educational commitments with enough clarity to make it possible to judge alternative ways of allocating faculty positions. In turn, we feel it is the obligation of the faculty, presumably working through the FEPC, to make specific proposals for

6 Report: future directions

this reallocation in consultation with the president. We would then expect her to convey a final recommendation to the trustees for their approval.

Given this division of responsibility, it seems necessary for an *ad hoc* committee constituted as ours is to assume responsibility for making recommendations that are addressed to faculty and administration as well as trustees. That is, we feel an obligation not only to recommend overall reductions in faculty size, but to spell out the ways in which we think those cuts might be achieved.

In developing a proposal for the allotment of faculty positions the futures committee asked a subcommittee to draw specific practical conclusions from the larger group's discussions. The delegation of responsibility seemed appropriate because in making these specific recommendations the committee recognized that it was doing something very different from outlining a broadly conceived policy for approval by the trustees. In short it was not felt to be necessary to discuss each recommendation in detail, but instead to exemplify general principles expressed by the committee as a whole. In its deliberations the subcommittee has sought to recognize disciplines and sub-disciplines that are essential to the intellectual health of the college. But it has also felt free to suggest that some of the things now taught may not be necessary, just as they were not considered necessary a decade or so ago before the college expanded. (At that time, for example, the college had only 7½ faculty members in literature exclusive of languages, and twelve in the social sciences.) In other words, rather than "shave" existing divisions, we have undertaken to rethink them on a reduced scale.

In order to realize a savings of \$225,000 in 1975-76 dollars (or \$285,000 in 1979-80, assuming average annual faculty salary increments of approximately 6 per cent) we would recommend eliminating 12 faculty positions and the equivalent of nine assistantships. The assistantships would include four in languages plus the position of director of the language laboratory, three in black music, and one in sculpture. This would leave only two assistantships, both in the early childhood center. We fully realize the serious implications that this cut would have for black music and therefore are recommending an increase in the number of faculty positions allotted this activity. We further recognize the implications of this proposal for the study of languages and feel obligated to explain something of our reasoning.

Our discussions about the college's curricular and pedagogical commitments have led us to feel that Bennington should not offer courses that are primarily focused on the study of language as opposed to literature. It is not that we wish to deny that the study of languages is a significant activity, any more than we feel the college means to imply that formal training in astronomy or ballet is not worthwhile. But we do not feel that Bennington should continue to undertake the obligation to provide elementary language instruction, an obligation assumed only recently. Students wishing to master a second or third language might be advised to work intensively in the summer, to take time off from the college whether with or without "credit," to enroll in a foreign university — the options seem numerous.

In the area of sculpture we are hard pressed to know why the sculptors need an assistant more than the ceramists do, and would strongly prefer that if the visual artists have an extra part-time position they allot it to a faculty member rather than an assistant. We do not feel it appropriate to reiterate the discussion of the last several years about the need to reassert that Bennington has but one teaching "class" and not a covert professional hierarchy. It is our conviction, as we know it was the conviction of the FEPC last year, that students who come to Bennington should be taught by professionals who are recruited and reviewed by the most scrupulous processes. This is not to say that there have not been teaching assistants and associates in the past who have made significant

contributions to the education of students, but in the future we feel it is important to make a strong statement about the fundamental equality of all members of the teaching staff and to guarantee that it is not equality in title only, but in fact.

The question of exactly how to reallocate faculty positions cannot be addressed by any simple formula. We have looked at figures that give us some idea of average faculty load in the various divisions, but we feel that it would be a grave error to seek an arithmetical solution to an educational problem. In short, while we have not closed our eyes to the possible implications of current enrollment patterns, we feel it is important to bring to a discussion of faculty "slots" a sense of what the college's educational commitments should be and not to rely on the commitments of current students as a sure guide. If we were to base our recommendations solely on present enrollments, the college after reductions would look something like this:

Divisions	Altered Number of Faculty Positions
Black Music	2¼
Dance	3½
Dance and Drama (Design)	2¼
Drama	4
Literature (apart from Languages)	11¼
Languages	4
Music	7
Science and Mathematics	4½
Social Sciences (including Early Childhood)	11¼
Visual Arts	11
Total	61½

Instead we favor a paradigm along these lines:

Divisions as Newly Constituted	Proposed Number of Faculty Positions	Net Change Plus Minus
Performing Arts	20	3½
Literature and Languages	12¼	5
Science and Mathematics	8¼	
Social Sciences	12	4
Visual Arts	9	½
Totals	61½	12

The proposal to eliminate five assistantships in languages for reasons already described points to our further recommendation touching literature. Instead of maintaining a faculty member for each of four languages, with a second in French, we propose that the college appoint two or three faculty members whose main interests lie in a foreign literature or in comparative literature. We assume that the Literature Division should also invest heavily in creative writers — perhaps as many as three poets and three novelists. Finally, we judge that it should continue to appoint faculty members whose interests lie in the historical and critical approach to literature. If three positions were assigned to each of these categories, the division would require 12 positions in all.

The Social Science Division presents somewhat different issues. Although there are significant differences among members of the literature faculty, they all communicate relatively freely with each other about an essentially shared activity. (Hence their ability to shift among literatures and between "critical" and "creative" work.) By contrast, the Social Science Division represents a number of distinctive and even discrete disciplines. These disciplines have a good deal in common, but they also depend upon specialized modes of inquiry and accretions of knowledge that cannot in any useful sense be reduced to common terms.

Confronted with the problem of reinventing the division, the members of the committee chose to take a middle path between reaffirming existing disciplines in isolation from each other and throwing all of the positions into a general social-science pool. Instead we sought to recognize major characteristics of the disciplines as they have become established at the college and to group them together accordingly before allotting

positions to them. In the committee's view, the best way to reconstruct the social sciences at Bennington is to assign three or four faculty positions to each of three areas or types of inquiry: history and political science — empirical disciplines focusing on societies at large; philosophy and social theory — speculative disciplines grounded in precise verbal analysis; and anthropology and psychology — behavioral sciences addressing many of the same questions and attracting many of the same students. The committee would also propose to continue the work of the early childhood center on its present scale and to retain it in the division, but not to consider it as part of any of the three designated clusters. As a result, the division would be allotted between 10 and 13 faculty members. The committee thinks that it would require at least 12, that is three in history and politics, four in philosophy and social theory, four in psychology and anthropology, and one in early childhood (plus two assistants).

Some further explanation is probably necessary here. The grouping of history and political science, which is familiar in many colleges and universities, commonly incorporates economics as well. We too would include economics if the experience of the college did not suggest that economics as pursued here more properly belongs in the area of philosophy and social theory; the institution is simply not likely to teach economics in the conventional sense, nor do we think it should. At the same time, nothing in the committee's proposal is intended to suggest that traditional economics could not be taught as part of a history-government-economics cluster; its groupings are intended to be guidelines for the next few years rather than prescriptions for the distant future. Nor do we envision rejecting a faculty member because he/she wishes to teach in two or even three of the designated areas. Indeed, the very possibility of honoring such overlaps is what makes the idea of retaining a division of social sciences attractive.

Much the same thing may be said of the proposed cluster in philosophy and social theory, which would presumably include both political theory and economic theory. For one thing, the grouping already substantially exists at the college, although it is obscured by formal disciplinary boundaries: each of the college's philosophers has a significant interest or experience in the history of philosophy and in the application of philosophy to social phenomena, characteristics the college's political and economic theorists largely share. More than this the committee judges that the grouping of theoretical and predominantly speculative activities in one section of the social sciences would have the effect of pointing out to students both inside and outside the division that different kinds of intellectual activity may usefully be applied to social phenomena and that the subject matter of the social sciences is less crucial than their characteristic modes of operation.

Many of the considerations that apply to the Social Science Division also seem to apply to the Science Division, which resembles the Social Science Division in its effort to teach a number of discrete disciplines that bear significant relationships to each other. The members of the committee felt less than able to judge how the Science Division might be reconstructed, but were unwilling simply to assign a number of faculty positions to the sciences and imply that we were indifferent to the question of how these positions might be utilized. We arrived at the following propositions, which we think should be guidelines for reconstituting the division.

(1) The division should consider very seriously the impact that the demands of post-graduate training in mathematics, medicine, or any of the natural sciences have on its curriculum. In our opinion, the tendency of the division to focus on these needs may well militate against its making a significant contribution to the life of the college as a whole. We understand that work in the sciences often demands a succession of rigorous courses that are unlikely to attract non-majors. We also

recognize that for many years the science faculty were starved for both students and equipment, and that the influx of capable students during recent years has understandably tempted them to address themselves to pre-professional needs. But the new Bennington should not replicate either the weaknesses of the past nor the measures that were taken to compensate for them, and science at Bennington should function more effectively as part and parcel of a truly liberal education. In our opinion the members of the science faculty can help to achieve this result by reconsidering the nature of their course offerings. In particular, they should address themselves to the cleavage that apparently exists between a handful of general introductory courses and the rest of the science curriculum, a cleavage which has the effect of discouraging non-majors from treating any of the sciences as a continuing interest.

(2) In rethinking its curriculum, the Science Division should also consider whether the interests of the college — which is to say the interests of its students — are best served by present allocations of faculty energies. In the opinion of the committee, the division has not convincingly resolved the uneasy distinction between fundamentally empirical work, supported by extensive laboratories, and fundamentally theoretical work. Nor is its openness to courses of general interest (like those in environmental studies or in waves) entirely reassuring, given the division's limited numbers and the fact that students in such courses cannot effectively build upon them. Again, there is the perennial problem of what to do about physics: is physics sufficiently distinctive, and sufficiently important as a distinct discipline, to warrant a greater faculty commitment? Nor are these the only concerns the committee felt. Rather, it experienced a general sense of uneasiness at the present commitments of the Science Division without being able to say exactly how that uneasiness might be removed. Perhaps the question of character and distribution of work in the sciences should again be made the focus of a committee appointed especially for the purpose.

Faced with these problems and recognizing their own limitations, the members of the committee decided only that we could not vote to recommend reducing the science faculty. We hope, however, that the division will rethink its current commitments, and we feel that it might well be able to claim a larger number of faculty members if its operations were more systematically conceived and more effectively addressed to the college as a whole. For the moment, however, it would seem to qualify for eight positions plus a part-time laboratory instructor.

So far as the faculty in the performing arts are concerned, the committee judges that their already close relationships with each other, reinforced by their meeting as a single body to deal with shared buildings and concerns, should enable them to function effectively with 20 rather than their present 23½ faculty members.

One of the committee's premises has been the expectation that the new facilities in dance and drama will require a year-round technical staff to provide necessary services for any performers who use them. Hence the present faculty "slots" in design can gradually be converted into "slots" associated with the building, to be supported, we would hope, by income from non-term time activities. We recognize that such a transfer of responsibilities will curtail the extent to which Bennington students can treat design as a "major" or a substantial portion of a major; there simply will not be faculty members who are free to teach full quarters in design. But we feel that this change is entirely consonant with our hope to move away from the pre-professional major and from the idea of coverage within divisions. We are also aware that quarters in design have been used to secure the labor necessary to the staging of productions. We would therefore suggest that, as in the past, dance and drama students be expected to commit a given number of hours to work backstage as part of their various quarters in performance or com-

position.

The only other general consideration that entered into the committee's discussions of the performing arts was the sense that none of the existing divisions should be permitted to fall below three faculty members, if only to preserve a sufficient complexity and range in that (sub)division's operations. This consideration would chiefly affect black music; in the proposed performing arts division there would be at least three black musicians as long as black music remained a separate activity. Otherwise, the committee was inclined to believe that the performing arts division could best work out its own combinations of faculty assignments more or less after the model of the Music Division, which seems to have succeeded as well as any existing division in making available a variety of activities to both introductory and advanced students. For what it may be worth, however, the committee contemplated allotting a total of nine positions (including at least two in design) for the time being to dance and drama, and eleven to music and black music, compared with the present totals of 11¼ and 12¼ respectively.

Visual arts has come last in this part of our report because the committee was on the whole happy about its structure and operations. The division seems to have grouped its separate fields sensibly into two-dimensional studies, three-dimensional studies, and history and criticism. So, too, it has developed an introductory course that apparently works well both for prospective majors and for non-majors. We also noted the large number of students the division teaches, and although we expect our recommendations affecting student programs to reduce that number somewhat, we believe that enrollments in the visual arts will remain heavy. * Hence we propose to assign a total of nine faculty members to the division, one-half position more than at present.

Given these reallocations, the total number of faculty positions in literature, social science (including early childhood), and science would be 32 plus two quarter-time positions to accommodate existing part-time appointments in literature and science. At the same time there would be 29 positions in the arts. In the opinion of the committee this slight preponderance of the more traditionally academic disciplines over the artistic ones would be appropriate because the two prospective arts divisions, taken together, would clearly outnumber literature and social science. In other words, a sort of balance would be maintained between the "academic" and the "arts" divisions, but the sciences would help to make that balance flexible rather than rigid. For that matter, the same numbers suggest that the literature faculty would have six positions devoted to creative activity, a circumstance that would more than tip the balance between "creative" and "critical" activities in favor of the arts but still leave the critical or analytic activities with 26 positions.

The future

We realize that no matter how many pages of this report might be devoted to commentary about the ways in which Bennington could operate at a student-faculty ratio of approximately 9.7:1, the cuts themselves will loom so large that a great deal of energy will be spent on alternative proposals offered in the spirit of "Let us do anything rather than that." A substantial majority of the committee therefore wants to go on record as believing that were the college to find itself able to increase the instructional budget in the future it should not devote its resources to restoring the total number of faculty positions to the current level.

** Any pressure to diversify students' programs will presumably cut down on enrollments in the visual arts, which often represent a commitment of three-fourths of a given student's time to that division. But the same pressure applied to literature and social science majors will have the effect of pushing many of them into additional work in art.*

Instead we feel that the college would do well to allocate its resources rather differently than it has in the past, seeking to support approximately 60 regular faculty members (and to support them more adequately), while actively exploring a variety of ways of diversifying both the instructional staff and the instructional setting. We strongly believe in the need to have more teachers of the sort brought to the college under the terms of the Hadley Fellowship, people whose professional commitments make it inconceivable that they would become regular faculty members, but who are interested in teaching for one or two terms. We would urge that every effort be made to secure funds for similar fellowships and believe that in the future the college would be well served to have four or five of these endowments instead of just one.

We further believe that the new Arts Center, in combination with the anticipated proliferation of non-term-time programs, will make it possible for the college to provide a working environment, and perhaps matching funds of some sort, to help support newly formed string quartets, dance companies, mime troupes, in short, groups of artists who need space and time to work together, and who, in turn, might teach (or take as apprentices) a certain number of Bennington students. We have talked briefly about the opportunities the new complex affords for students in the visual arts to work side by side instead of coming together only for formal "crits." This learning environment could, we feel, be substantially enriched by the presence of young artists, not yet as well established professionally as members of the faculty but more advanced than the undergraduates, who might be modestly supported by the college in return for being available to students.

The Farmhouse on the grounds of the Park-McCullough House offers a resource commensurate with the arts complex for individuals working in literature and the social sciences. In return for living and writing space (and again a small stipend), the college should be able to attract scholars and writers who would be willing to undertake several tutorials or a series of readings. In addition to these fellowships, members of the committee were intrigued by the possibility of funding special events, not festivals in the purely celebratory sense, but periods of up to a week in which the college as a whole could become involved in a single enterprise shaped by the presence of distinguished visitors.

In short, we would like to see the college not only survive the next five years, but move steadily in the direction of making its purposes more coherent and its practices more flexible. We believe that a distinct pedagogical commitment is entirely consonant with an experimental attitude toward what should be taught; indeed we feel that a commitment to active learning mandates constant experimentation. Whitehead speaks of the teacher as "ignorant man thinking." We believe that Bennington College should reaffirm its original understanding of what it means to be educated, to articulate those "well-understood principles," and then proceed to apply them imaginatively, to improvise in the sense that every good teacher must improvise.

For want of shared principles the college has concentrated on regularizing its arrangements; divisionalism, over-majoring, distribution requirements, an hierarchically conceived curriculum, coverage, presumptive tenure — all reflect a commitment to form as opposed to substance. As long as the college continues in this formalism we feel it is safe to predict that it will become both poorer and more expensive. We recommend instead that Bennington rededicate itself to a distinctive educational mission and thereby free itself once more to be genuinely experimental.

See back cover for appendix-financial projection.

8 Report: future directions

Appendix — Financial Projection

	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80
Operating expense: (assuming 7.5 per cent annual increase)	\$3,862,000	\$4,152,000	\$4,463,000	\$4,798,000	\$5,158,000
Miscellaneous income: faculty rents (6 per cent annual increase)	60,000	63,500	67,500	71,500	76,000
Snack bar (7.5 per cent)	36,000	38,500	41,500	44,500	48,000
Application fees	25,000	24,000	23,000	22,000	21,000
Early childhood center (7.5 per cent)	16,000	17,000	18,500	20,000	21,500
Miscellaneous	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Totals	167,000	173,000	180,500	188,000	196,500
Operating expense Less income	3,695,000	3,919,000	4,282,500	4,610,000	4,961,500

Alternative assumptions for setting the comprehensive fee:

A. Fee pegged to uncovered operating expense (Actual fee \$6,280)	\$6,700	\$7,200	\$7,750	\$8,350
B. Fee increased 5 per cent annually (\$6,280)	\$6,595	\$6,930	\$7,280	\$7,650
C. Fee pegged to uncovered operating expense, assuming reductions in teaching staff to realize a savings of \$285,000 in 1979-80 (\$6,280)	\$6,650	\$7,050	\$7,450	\$7,850

Financial aid: (9 per cent x 595 x comprehensive fee)

Alternative A (fee pegged to uncovered operating expense) (actual budget \$336,000)	\$359,000	\$386,000	\$415,000	\$447,000
Alternative B (fee rising 5 per cent annually) (\$336,000)	\$353,000	\$371,000	\$390,000	\$410,000
Alternative C (fee pegged to uncovered operating expense assuming reductions in teaching staff) (\$336,000)	\$355,000	\$378,000	\$400,000	\$420,000

	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80
Deficit to be covered by annual giving plus income from endowment					
Alternative A Operating deficit (uncovered expenses minus fees)	0	0	0	0	0
Debt Service	326,000	326,000	326,000	326,000	326,000
Financial Aid	(336,000)	359,000	386,000	415,000	447,000
Alternative A Total	656,000	685,000	712,000	741,000	773,000
Alternative B operating deficit	0	55,000	160,000	280,000	410,000
Debt service	326,000	326,000	326,000	326,000	326,000
Financial aid	336,000	353,000	371,000	390,000	410,000
Alternative B total	614,400	734,000	857,000	996,000	1,146,000
Alternative C operating deficit	0	0	0	0	0
Debt service	326,000	326,000	326,000	326,000	326,000
Financial aid	336,000	355,000	378,000	400,000	420,000
Alternative C total	662,000	681,000	704,000	726,000	746,000
Income from annual giving (assuming 10 per cent annual increment)	250,000	275,000	300,000	330,000	365,000

Deficit minus annual giving

Alternative A 408,000 * Alternative B 781,000 * Alternative C 381,000 *

* Only the figures for 1979-80 are shown because they are what is crucial in planning a five year capital program. Assuming that by that date there will be \$3,000,000 left from current endowment, the following figures reflect *additional* capital needs.

	Assuming a 5 per cent return:	Assuming a 7 per cent return:
Alternative A:	\$5,160,000	\$2,800,000
Alternative B:	12,620,000	8,157,000
Alternative C:	4,620,000	2,450,000