

Office of Bennington College  
Bennington, Vermont

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BENNINGTON, VT. - September 5 - A new program of Basic Studies in the elements of the American cultural tradition will be introduced this fall into the curriculum of Bennington College. The program establishes "literacy in the arts, sciences and humanities" of Western civilization as the minimum standard for the general education of all Bennington students. At the same time, it provides a common foundation for the Special Studies through which each student pursues her individual interests in the field of her own choice. This coordinated plan of Basic and Special Studies is designed to prepare students for responsible citizenship as well as give them competence in a particular field.

The announcement of the revised curriculum in the current "Bennington College Bulletin" coincided with the tenth anniversary of the entrance of the College's first class. It marked also the completion of the first year of Dr. Lewis Webster Jones' administration.

The new program re-emphasizes the original Bennington principles of the individual's interest drive and the necessity for self-discipline, Dr. Jones said. It will be carried out under the College's counseling plan which, without being a free-election system, takes the individual student into account from the time she enters until she graduates. The new program is the product of ten years' experience in

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observing how students learn. This development, Dr. Jones emphasized, is the natural result of the College's original policy of continuous self-evaluation and self-criticism by students, faculty, trustees and outside experts.

"The permanent function of a college," the "Bulletin" said, "more than ever apparent in this time, is to realize the ideal of a liberal education: to educate students both as human beings and as citizens. A college must pass on to its students the main elements of their cultural heritage - the achievement and knowledge accumulated through centuries of human effort; and it must, at the same time, develop people capable of maintaining, enriching and advancing that heritage. The tradition to which we belong has as its core respect for and reliance on the individual."

Bennington's increased emphasis on these basic cultural elements, Dr. Jones explained, will be less an attempt to supply detailed factual knowledge than to present the historical and philosophical backgrounds from which all fields of learning derive. A wide variety of source materials and basic texts will be used. Much of the material has been taught at Bennington previously, but it is now arranged specifically to serve as a common foundation for all students, and to give them a common vocabulary and insight into fields other than their own. These are not survey courses, Dr. Jones pointed out; they present samples of great human achievement, each to be thoroughly examined, but make no attempt to skim over the whole of human knowledge.

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Otherwise, there are few changes indicated in the Bennington program, except for special responsibilities toward the war effort. Increased opportunity has been offered for special training in subjects directly related to war service such as economics, statistics, chemistry and mathematics and Red Cross courses; the College supplies Red Cross instructors to many neighboring communities. The College Farm, begun as a war measure but planned as a permanent feature, puts to use about 200 acres of highly productive land surrounding the campus. Voluntary student labor, a quick-freeze unit, and a root storage cellar are all contributing to the College's economic self-sufficiency, and tie in directly with science studies.

The College will open Wednesday, September 9, with a full complement of students and the smallest turn-over of students in its history.

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