

---

CONTENTS

Aims and Methods	page 2
The Trustee Faculty Committee to explore the future of Bennington	page 3
Report of the Educational Planning Subcommittee	page 8
Student Statement on Educational Revision	page 9
A Plan by Claude Fredericks	page 10
Report of the Trustees, 1970	page 12

---

It is, of course, impossible to print all data which relates to educational policy at Bennington. In addition to the documents printed here, the following books and reports can provide significant background for further discussion:

**BENNINGTON COLLEGE: The Development of an Educational Idea** by Barbara Jones; Harper and Brothers, New York.

**PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE: Attitude Formation in a Student Community**, by Theodore M. Newcomb; Dryden Press, New York.

**PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE**, by Theodore M. Newcomb, Kathryn E. Koenig, Richard Flacks, Donald P. Warwick; John Wiley and Sons, New York.

**A FINANCIAL STUDY OF BENNINGTON COLLEGE, 1936-1959, and A Projection of Its Operating Expenses to 1969**, by Harry Pearson.

---

---

# Documents on Educational Policy at Bennington College

---

## Preface

Here is a collection of documents on Bennington College's aims and methods. The purpose of publishing them is to stimulate and enrich discussion of the educational issues concerned as well as to inform alumni and friends of the College of the range of the College's thinking on these issues.

I feel it important to underscore for the reader that the pieces which follow were written under varying circumstances and to satisfy different immediate needs: some were intended as public statements, others not; some were the products of one hand, others of a committee; some were the work of weeks and months, others of years. I would hope the reader will bear these variations in mind.

I want also to emphasize to the reader the fact that the documents presented were written at different periods of time; the earliest dates from the earliest history of the College and the latest from last spring. Obviously, many things — including our system of curricular planning and counseling, coeducation, the size of our faculty and student body and the character of our physical plant — have changed since some of these documents were written. We feel that even though some of them are in this sense "dated," they are nevertheless address themselves to issues of fundamental and enduring importance which should be of interest of anyone thinking about Bennington College's future.

Edward J. Bloustein

Non-Profit Organization  
U. S. POSTAGE  
1.6c PAID  
Bennington, Vermont  
Permit No. 4

MRS JULIA R. SAWYER  
HOLLINS COLLEGE  
ROANOKE VA 24020

# Aims and Methods

## ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF THE BENNINGTON PROGRAM AS PUBLISHED IN THE EDUCATIONAL PLAN FOR BENNINGTON COLLEGE, 1929

1. SELECTIVE PLAN OF ADMISSION on the basis of quality of the candidate's entire school record and personal history, with no required examinations or certificates in a specified list of school subjects.
2. TUITION TO COVER FULL COST OF INSTRUCTION with generous scholarships for those who need and deserve them.
3. SELECTIVE REGIONAL AND SPECIAL SCHOLARSHIPS awarded on a four year basis to prospective students of unusual promise.
4. INDIVIDUALLY ARRANGED WORK FOR THE FIRST TWO YEARS taking full account of previous school courses and of differences in personal development and interest, instead of general requirements or free election of courses.
5. TWO YEAR SEQUENCE OF INTRODUCTORY COURSES designed to show the significant content and the particular method in each major field.
6. RECOGNITION OF THE FINE ARTS as one of the four major fields in the college curriculum.
7. PREPARATION DURING FIRST TWO YEARS FOR INFORMAL, INDIVIDUAL METHODS of the latter years of membership in a trial major conference group.
8. TOOL COURSES, such as mathematics and foreign languages, prescribed only for those who look forward to major work requiring their use; not for all.
9. ADVANCEMENT FROM JUNIOR DIVISION (first two years) to Senior Division (last two years) only by demonstration of distinct ability and interest in one of the major fields; no advancement to Senior Division or award of degree by mere accumulation of grades or by passing a specified number of courses.
10. WORK OF LAST TWO YEARS FOR ALL IN A CHOSEN MAJOR FIELD similar in aim and method to honors type of work now open to selected students in several existing colleges.
11. MAJOR WORK FOR STUDENTS NOT LIMITED TO DEPARTMENTAL SPECIALIZATION but planned for varying vocation, pre-vocational, or avocational life interests.
12. OPPORTUNITY TO FOLLOW SIDE INTERESTS as they develop, through individual work rather than by attending courses, thus aiming at self-dependence.
13. A LONG WINTER RECESS giving both students and faculty opportunity for travel, field work, and educational advantages of metropolitan life.
14. PROVISION FOR NONRESIDENT WORK IN UNIVERSITY AND OTHER CENTERS during the last year or two whenever facilities for advanced work are more favorable than at Bennington.
15. COMMUNITY SUPPORT OF "STUDENT ACTIVITIES" which have intellectual, artistic, or recreational value and limitation of campus organizations to such activities.
16. SMALL, SELF-GOVERNING HOUSE GROUPS FOR ALL, serving as centers of social life and informal faculty-student contacts.

17. CONTINUOUS UTILIZATION OF ALL KNOWLEDGE OF STUDENT PERSONNEL for more accurate, thorough diagnosis of the real needs of modern girls in home, school, college, and occupation.

18. FACULTY CHOSEN PRIMARILY FOR TEACHING ABILITY; adjustable and ample faculty salaries, with policy of careful selection and reappointment of faculty, President, and Trustees, to avoid "dead wood" and to maintain flexibility.

## "AIMS" AS PUBLISHED IN THE BENNINGTON COLLEGE ANNOUNCEMENT FOR 1932

THE UNDERLYING ideas determining the choice and survival of the specific teaching devices and activities of the new College may be summarized as follows:

- (1) the education is a process continuing through life and persists most effectively throughout the important years of adulthood when one has acquired the habit of educating oneself;
- (2) that a principal aim of the College should be to accustom its students to the habit of engaging voluntarily in learning rather than of submitting involuntarily at certain periods to formal instruction;
- (3) that such educational self-dependence can be developed most effectively if the student works at tasks which have meaning, significance, or interest to her;
- (4) that continuing education, self-initiated, is likely to take place most surely where the student has attained expertness, or a sense of mastery in some few fields of enduring interest or use, rather than acquired smatterings in a great many fields;
- (5) that external disciplines such as compulsory class attendance, competitive and publicly-awarded grades and prizes, periodic written examinations on formalized blocks of knowledge, and numerical accumulation of credits to earn degrees interfere seriously with real incentives and internal disciplines related to the student's own developing purposes and interests;
- (6) that direct experiences — planning, organizing, manipulating, constructing, and investigating — in co-operation with book learning and the acquisition of knowledge are valuable means for developing permanent interests pursued without the necessity of external compulsion;
- (7) that tools of learning, such as statistics, and the use of English, to have meaning as well as to be most economically mastered, should as far as possible be connected immediately or in the process of learning with the ends or uses for which they are instruments rather than acquired wholesale as separate disciplines related but vaguely to a possible distant use;
- (8) that there is wide variation between persons and in the same person at different times as to the subjects or problems which, having meaning, will consequently engage the person in active learning which leads to understanding; that, therefore, programs of college work should at all points allow for individual variation;
- (9) that intellectual development cannot and should not be isolated from the development of the whole personality, and that as far as possible the general college arrangements, especially individual guidance, should give proper weight to physical, emotional, moral, and aesthetic as well as to intellectual factors in personal growth;
- (10) that the college, jointly with other educational agencies, should accept responsibility for cultivating in its students by all available means attitudes of social responsibility, social participation and co-operation rather than aloofness; that it should promote a sympathetic but objective and realistic understanding of the world of our own day as well as a sense of perspective derived from understanding of the past; an attitude of suspended judgment towards the strange and the new, and tolerance towards persons and customs alien to the student's own experience.

## The Trustee-Faculty Committee to Explore the Future of Bennington College

Mrs. Richard S. Emmet, Chairman

Mr. Charles Dollard

Mr. Lionel Nowak

Mr. Myron S. Falk, Jr.

Mr. Wallace P. Scott

Mr. Stanley Edgar Hyman

Mr. Rush Welter

The following excerpts, from the report to the faculty and trustees of Bennington College titled informally "The Golden Book," were written in 1961. They have been chosen because of their specific relevance to current educational policy discussions. The full text of the report includes also views on counseling, the educational counseling committee, the Non-Resident Term, student social life and general meetings.

### 1. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Soon after President Fels came to Bennington College he initiated, with support from the Fund for the Advancement of Education of the Ford Foundation, a series of studies of the operations of the college. These preliminary studies prepared the way, in turn, for an extended exploration of the educational future of the college, which was also supported in part by the Ford Foundation, and which was undertaken by a committee made up of three members of the board of trustees of the college and four members of its teaching faculty. The pages that follow constitute the final report and recommendations of that committee to the president, the faculty, and the board of trustees.

The preliminary studies of the college were intended only to provide information that would assist in educational planning for the future, but they presented the members of the trustee-faculty committee with one inescapable financial consideration bearing on the educational stature and prospect of the college. Because of revolutionary developments in American higher education, which Bennington cannot afford to ignore, it must soon take steps to raise faculty salaries markedly.

There is no need to elaborate on the circumstances that led to this conclusion, because its main elements are obvious. Colleges throughout the United States are preparing themselves to teach a vastly increased number of students, and they will be forced to compete for effective teachers. To the extent that Bennington College prides itself on effective teaching it will be vulnerable to this sort of competition unless it too can compete in salaries and other professional perquisites.

Hence the committee to explore the future of Bennington College began its deliberations with a discussion of the features peculiar to the college that make it unusually expensive of faculty time: weekly counseling, small classes and tutorials, frequent close contact with students. The committee soon agreed, however, that a really good college education requires most of these faculty commitments, or at least that no arithmetical formulas increasing the ratio between students and faculty or otherwise changing our educational policies can be justified a priori. It decided to approach the college's future in other terms entirely, considering shortcomings in our present academic practices, and devising means whereby they might be overcome. It had some faith that a better education for our students might also be a more economical enterprise for our faculty, in that there is admittedly a good deal of unrewarding drudgery in what the faculty now finds itself doing. But the committee's main premise was that the quality of our education is the only criterion we can adopt in reexamining our present policies, and in the light of Bennington's experience it had reason to hope that quality would attract financial resources.

Fortunately, the same phenomenon that forces the college to search for additional sources of revenue may also afford it some opportunity for adjusting its standards and curriculum. A continuing increase in college applications should make possible

(among other things) a still more selective admissions policy, a more deliberate shaping of our student body, or an expansion of the college if that step proves advantageous. But the opportunities that increased applications may create must be dealt with consciously and constructively if we are to derive the maximum advantages from them. To leave the policies of the college unexamined and unrevised at this time would almost inevitably be to condemn it to carrying forward the shortcomings of the past under an illusion that our problems will disappear automatically as college applications rise.

It was in this context that the committee began to re-examine the fundamental commitments of the college: not to abandon what was good, but to consider which of its original premises were still valid and which might be amended or discarded either in theory or in practice. In the opinion of the committee, the college is such a strong institution educationally that its premises and practices invite the most rigorous and candid scrutiny its supporters can give them.

### 1. Philosophical Considerations

In general, of course, the committee recognized that our goal is and should be a liberal education. Whatever our students are destined to become after they graduate, they will have been well served by us only if they have had some opportunity to develop an informed perspective on their culture and their time, and they will have been badly served if we have offered them no more than technical preparation to meet the specific demands that their prospective roles in society may place upon them. For the same reason, the college curriculum should embrace the visual and performing arts as well as the social sciences, the natural sciences and mathematics as well as literature and language. The committee accepted these commitments of the college without controversy.

At the same time, the committee also concurred in the faculty's belief that the most effective means of achieving the goals of a liberal education are the techniques that are frequently identified with progressive education. It is not that the Bennington College faculty is deliberately or even consciously "progressive" in its orientation; but by temperament and experience alike most of its members have come to observe progressive principles in their everyday activities as teachers. That is, they bear in mind as teachers and counselors a number of desirable goals and capabilities toward which each student's career should probably lead, but they also recognize that it is the student's own commitments and activities that will ultimately determine the extent to which she can and will make those goals and capabilities a part of her life. Hence they allow her a considerable freedom to find her own way to a reasonably complete education.

The committee had no wish to challenge these basic principles, but it felt some need to spell them out more sharply as a way of discovering where our current practice fails to serve our declared purposes. In reaffirming the college's belief in a liberal education, for example, the committee agreed that all of the tastes, values, and skills, all of the habits, facts, and perspectives that a college student may acquire become truly liberal only to the extent that they are a resource for her continued intellectual and aesthetic and emotional development. No college can guarantee that all of its students will be effectively educated persons when they leave the campus, and there is certainly no way to measure precisely what capacities for growth they take away with them, but the committee felt that so far as possible the Bennington College degree should stand for long-range educational promise as well as an achieved ability to deal with college work.

The committee's agreement on this point led naturally to a discussion of the extent to which any student can participate effectively in the culture in which she is to live unless she is reasonably well acquainted with its past and its present and has some means for dealing with its future. In one set of terms, the problem is one of ensuring that all students who lay claim to a liberal education possess a minimal acquaintance with the basic ideas, values, theories, and techniques that have shaped the world in which they live. In other terms, the problem may be stated as one of ensuring both breadth and depth in every course of study leading to the degree, inasmuch as no one can be truly deep who is not also broad, and vice versa. In the judgment of the committee, however, these formulations and others like them misstate many of the problems they are designed to solve. They are valid in the sense that all truisms have their validity; but they fail to confront the educational process in directly relevant terms, and they threaten it with arbitrary criteria that can be met with facility and forgotten with ease.

It seemed to the committee that instead of attempting to define common educational goals to which each student must be held, the college is wise to encourage each craft or discipline that she pursues to define its own goals, but to make sure at the same time that no one craft or discipline becomes the only resource a student develops during her four years in college. The effect of such a pluralistic approach to liberal education is to assert the over-all educational aim of the college not as a hierarchy of formally-stated goals but as a cluster of different kinds of abilities that each student develops and brings to the point at which she will be capable of further developing them independently or with a minimum of formal instruction. It is, in short, to carry the student to the point from which she can and in all probability will become an effective participant in the culture because of her informed interest in it.

The general proposition that the college best achieves its over-all goal by encouraging the development of each student's capabilities accords particularly well with the sense of the faculty that education is an intrinsically creative and clearly individual process. In the view of the faculty, which the committee shares, learning is a process that takes place in the student — not in the classroom or in the studio or laboratory, although these are indispensable accessories — and the strength of the college has been its insistence that every study constitute a rediscovery of significant problems and significant answers in the various crafts and disciplines it teaches. No one believes that this "creative" method is always successful, and everyone is aware that it leaves gaps not only between disciplines but also within them. But it has the virtue of providing the capable student with all the aids we can muster to enable her to become in her right something of a musician, something of an anthropologist, something of a poet.

Dependence upon the separate disciplines to educate each student has the further effect of raising the standards that she must meet in order to qualify for the bachelor's degree. We begin with each student's established perceptions and capabilities; but we demand that she develop an ability to function so far as possible like a practitioner in one or more of the arts or sciences. Similarly, we urge each craft and each discipline to define its own standards, but by relying upon teachers who are active in those fields we also identify academic success with the fullest possible realization of the qualities that are inherent in each academic enterprise. As a result, the student who is brought face to face with active practitioners in the fields she has chosen to explore is held to a far more sophisticated grasp of what she is learning than the student who is made responsible only for education in general, or for education divided between a "major" field and general background training. A problem of goals or a problem of standards arises only if we rely upon an inferior faculty to represent the disciplines, or permit students to define a whole educational career in terms of what they already know how to do well.

As these paragraphs indicate, a significant part of the work of the committee consisted of a considered reaffirmation of many of the college's original commitments. Ability to participate effectively in the culture of the modern world remains a more important criterion of the higher education than an accumulation of

background information about that culture, although informed participation admittedly depends upon information as well as ability and interest. A cluster of different approaches to that culture, each carried to a point of some sophistication, still gives the greatest assurance of continued vitality of mind and spirit after a student has left college. Growth of the student's original core of activity and interest continues to seem both the most promising vehicle and the soundest test of effective education.

Hence such difficulties as arise in the college seem to stem not so much from our premises as from the way in which we have applied them in practice, and the committee turned with some asperity to a consideration of ways in which our present techniques do not do justice to our principles. In the paragraphs that follow, the committee records what it considers to be our major difficulties and shortcomings as a college. The standard it assumes is always excellence; areas in which the college already approaches that ideal are not discussed except in passing.

### 2. Empirical Difficulties

To some extent, we are confronted by a problem of aging; the college is no longer a new institution, and its lapses from its own principles have become established as bad habits. Here, indeed, is a sufficient reason for contemplating reorganization of the curriculum, to introduce fresh perspectives on ourselves and our operations. Change is also in keeping with the original plan of the college, which called for a searching re-examination of its policies every five years. Again, the structure of the college today is an accumulation of various precedents, which bear no necessary relationship to each other, or which solve some problems but aggravate others. A comprehensive new arrangement of our curriculum and our expectations should help to rationalize our work as teachers and make us more effective while reducing some of our burdens. Still further, when confronted with difficulties we are too often content to let pious affirmation substitute for actual performance. According to the general theory of the college, for example, every member of the faculty does everything well — and we ignore the possibility that each might be more effective in a renovated educational structure. All these considerations point to the potential value of institutional reforms as a way of dealing with our problems.

Perhaps our most significant problem, in the judgment of the committee, is that we do not challenge every student to achieve a bona fide education. Our well-founded belief that learning is a purposive activity, that only a student's own interests and activities can bring her to make good use of her educational opportunities, has sometimes led us to accept any kind of purpose and any kind of activity as a valid definition of the higher learning. In theory, an active student broadens the range of her thinking, moves out into new fields of study, as she becomes more involved in a given craft or discipline. In practice, however, she may not; and we have found no proper way of making her degree depend upon this sort of extended grasp of the humanities.

By "humanities" the committee means all of the disciplines that Bennington now offers or would wish to offer.

This weakness in our educational system is most clearly demonstrated by the results of the committee's study of student programs. Several faculty members were asked to provide the names of relatively recent graduates who had made unusually effective use of the college. The same faculty members were also asked to provide the names of recent graduates who had made no better than an average use of it. The educational careers of these two groups of students were then compared in some detail to see whether there were important differences between them.

The differences proved to be striking. On one level, there was an obvious tendency for the "excellent" students to have made higher scores on the College Board aptitude examinations, and to have achieved greater distinction in the college, than the "average" students. Nevertheless, there were enough excellent students with low scores, and enough average students with high scores, to indicate that the faculty's designations were based upon the use made of Bennington College rather than upon the students' potential, and to suggest that student differences had not been overwhelming barriers to effective use of the college. More significantly, the excellent students had almost uniformly chosen one kind of program while in college, whereas the average students had chosen another. The excellent students were distinguished by a serious pursuit of the major and an equally serious (though sometimes abbreviated) pursuit of at least one other field of study. Moreover, they displayed a tendency to work at the most advanced level of which they were capable outside of the major as well as within it, and to devote several terms or even years to second fields of study. They also tended to work hard: many of them had taken five courses during most of their stay in college.

By contrast, the average students generally followed a major program surrounded by brief and even tentative experiences in a number of non-major disciplines. They also tended to work at the introductory level outside of the major, to the extent even of enrolling in beginning courses during their junior and senior years. Understandably, they were far less inclined than the excellent students to attempt five courses instead of four; but their records indicate that it was lack of commitment rather than lack of ability that held some of them back from a fifth course. Finally, their tentative plans and their instructors' comments indicate that most of them conceived of their education in external and transitional terms, as a step on the way to some other destination, be it profession, vocation, or marriage. On the other hand, the excellent students visualized their studies far more sharply in terms of goals and purposes intrinsic to them as humanistic disciplines. Adapting the terminology that David Riesman has employed, we might say that the excellent students had been "inner-directed" and the average students "other-directed" with respect to their college educations.

The terminology is directly applicable, without adaptation, to those average students whose programs were apparently shaped by their parents.

The differences, in any event, were unmistakable; their implications may be more problematical. Obviously, average students are not so likely as excellent students to pursue scholarship for its own sake, nor to press into more than one field of serious study at one time, nor to burden themselves voluntarily with additional courses. But the most significant finding of the whole study of student programs was that the educational counseling committees of the college had put obstacles in the way of the excellent students' typical educational planning, whereas they had accepted without criticism the undistinguished programs of the average students. This was one of the reasons the excellent students customarily enrolled in five courses: the committees insisted upon a distribution of academic interests, which the excellent students could accommodate to their much more serious purposes in fields outside the major only by taking extra courses. Meanwhile the average students effectively met the requirements of distribution, yet not — according to faculty members who had taught them — the demands of education.

On the basis of these considerations the committee believes that our present educational structure does not work effectively to maintain the standards that we generally ascribe to it. The committee recognizes that we may always have difficulty in attracting a sufficient number of potentially excellent students to enable us to gear the whole college to such excellence. But we have no reason to set our standards low, nor to define our educational patterns in such terms as to limit our best students unreasonably while making hardly any demands of our less able students. To the extent that many of our average students might well have met different criteria had we found means to enforce them, in fact, we have not even observed standards that are already plausible for today's student body.

Nor is our difficulty one that arises simply because the educational counseling committees have permitted weak students to choose weak programs while discouraging strong students from choosing strong ones; if it were, perhaps a simple exhortation to the committees would suffice for educational reform. Rather, the "balanced" program is a mark of our lack of "institutional" criteria for a legitimate education, coupled in many cases with sentimental confusions about student freedom and about tailoring every program to a student's inner needs. Within the major, it is clear, a student usually finds her path fairly clearly defined by requirements that the faculty has established or by natural sequences in the courses the division offers. Here, indeed, the craft tends to set the standards; but in other realms of a student's career it frequently does not. As our study indicates, a weak student may "pick up" a course in the social sciences, sample work in the visual arts, acquire "background" in literature, all without developing the kind of insight into each that will make it a permanently effective part of her education. Meanwhile, she is far less likely merely to sojourn in music, which treats all of its students as if they were in some sense majors, and she finds time for dance on the side only because the dance "extra" makes it possible for her to treat dance superficially without being penalized for her lack of involvement. Clearly, our high purposes are seldom realized in our practice.

Our greatest specific weakness lies in our students' substantial neglect of the natural sciences as part of a liberal education. Bennington College prides itself upon treating every humanistic discipline as having equal value in the higher education, but only 7 out of 147 students who graduated from the college in the last three years presented major work in science for the degree. Nineteen students are omitted from these tabulations because they had transferred to Bennington from other colleges where many of them had been compelled to take freshman science. Additional special students and students who did not graduate with their class are also omitted. Admittedly, 114 of the remaining 140 students had taken at least one course in science or mathematics, but 13 had taken no work in the science division apart from mathematics, and 111 in all had taken no more than a single year's work in either science or mathematics. Furthermore, 89 students had taken only introductory courses in natural science, whereas 12 had taken more advanced work. Finally, just over half of the 101 graduates who had enrolled in a science had taken only "Human Life and Environment." Every evidence suggests that exploration in the laboratory sciences had been slight.

This year's enrollments in the sciences suggest that today's freshmen may be more likely than some of their predecessors to begin their college careers with a course in science. (Many of the seniors of 1958, 1959, and 1960 first ventured into the sciences only during their junior or senior years.) In the view of the committee, however, these early enrollments will prove fruitful only if a number of beginning students go on to make science a continuing part of their education. Yet the expectations the college now lays before the student body, both formally and informally, hardly support commitments of this protracted sort for anyone but the dedicated majors. Even if most freshmen are being persuaded to attempt beginning work in the sciences, that is, we have not yet made science an equal partner in the curriculum. We have only installed an informal science requirement that works to satisfy our consciences without inducing students to view science intelligently.

Inadequate science enrollments are in some ways only symptomatic of a large problem of student freedom, however. In the considered judgment of the committee, the freedom a student should have in choosing among legitimate paths to the degree (or making lesser choices en route to it) does not constitute a reason for permitting her to choose her path badly — i.e. at random, or without due regard for the educational implications of her choice. Yet individual students have notoriously failed to meet legitimate standards of performance and expectation because the college had no firm ground for dealing with their oversights or their neglect. Discussion of such students among the faculty almost invariably raises controversy, in which advocates of "freedom" take extreme positions against the equally extreme advocates of "standards," and the committee is aware that it is inviting cleavage within the faculty by raising the question. It feels, however, that the issue of student freedom must be dealt with explicitly and imaginatively if we are to raise our educational achievements to the level of our professed aims.

The committee suggests that, in establishing what amounts to a science requirement, in authorizing educational counseling committees to supervise student programs, and in permitting the various divisions to establish requirements for their majors, the faculty has already adopted the view that free choice by students must nonetheless contribute to certain recognized goals. At the same time, however, the committee feels that neither the informal science requirement nor the counseling committees' rule-of-thumb "balance" in student programs has worked to encourage truly significant work, and it finds that divisional supervision of students' final two years has often prevented them from developing anywhere but in the major. In short, it senses that we have moved from a regime of freedom toward a regime of controls without achieving the over-all educational goals those controls should properly serve.

From the point of view of the committee, in fact, our various institutional techniques for shaping student programs wisely have gone too far toward establishing formal models of a satisfactory education, which may well be arbitrary in some cases if ineffective in others. And our practices have also had the unfortunate effect of emphasizing the differences between those who defend the freedom of the student in virtually anarchic terms, and those who inspect student programs for evidence of conformity to the tenets of general education or other external standards. Some new approach is needed that will offer every student a bona fide choice among the paths that she may follow, but leave no confusion in her mind about her need to follow those paths to a point of some achievement.

It is one of the premises of the college that counseling solves (or can be expected to solve) such difficulties. Ideally, the counselor ensures that the student's program makes sense both in and out of the major, helps her to order the wide variety of demands upon her time and energy, encourages her to extend the range of her interests, and presides over her development as a scholar and a human being. But while everyone who counsels undoubtedly serves all of these purposes well some of the time, hardly anyone can be equally competent to achieve all of them as often as we hope. If everyone counseled as effectively as we agree everyone should, in fact, there would be no need to discuss the academic problems of the college.

Entirely apart from the ordinary human frailties that beset every counselor, however, there are particular ways in which counseling appears in the judgment of the committee to fail to support its intended objectives. In the first place, so much is expected of it that it cannot possibly achieve all it is supposed to. Almost any shortcoming or difficulty the college discerns in a girl's career is likely to be referred to her counselor, from defects in her spelling and composition through racial or social prejudice to low morale or a lack of commitment to college work. More important, there is reason to think that a counselor should not be assigned responsibility for such matters anyway — not because they place such a burden on him, but because his constant intervention in a student's life tends to increase her dependence upon him just when she should be learning to depend more fully upon herself. The intimacy that counseling at its best creates may threaten as well as nourish independence, and at the junior and senior levels in particular it often seems to develop overtones of an unhealthy discipleship.

The committee invites those who would dispute its judgment to consider whether the student in a large conventional college is not in many ways forced to be independent. The committee does not advocate either the kinds of independence or the kinds of coercion that may exist on such a campus, but it feels bound to recognize the

possibility that in some respects students in such colleges have an advantage over our sometimes overprotected clients. At the very least, it thinks that the question is an open one, which deserves kinds of study the committee has not been able to give it.

Again, to the extent that counseling is a device employed by the college to secure the ends of a liberal education by means of persuasion rather than explicit rules, it tends on the one hand to substitute an adult's judgment for a student's deliberation over the alternatives open to her, and on the other hand to provide the willful student with means to defeat the very purposes that counseling ostensibly serves. (In these terms, counseling may both guarantee the vices and abandon the virtues of a conventional curriculum.) At the same time, the counselor tends to become each student's advocate rather than her mentor; yet the college relies heavily upon him — a single individual — to make most of the critical evaluations affecting the student's career.

Largely because of the weaknesses evident in counselors' supervision of student work, the faculty substituted annual review of student programs by the Educational Counseling Committee for biennial review by the Junior and Senior Division Committees in 1954. As this report has already suggested, the operations of this new committee are marred by intrinsic weaknesses. There are no clear-cut criteria for its decisions, and in the absence of such criteria the members of the individual panels are forced to rely upon a sort of generalized prudential wisdom that frequently bears no specific relationship to the capacities or needs of individual students. In addition, the committee is in practice an indefinite number of separate panels of faculty members, called together at irregular intervals and able to exercise neither continuous nor consistent oversight of student programs.

These weaknesses are magnified in turn by the role the counselor normally plays vis-a-vis each panel. In the first place, he often acts the part of a lawyer for the defense rather than a consultant on educational planning. Because he knows the student well while the members of the panel usually do not, moreover, even the most scrupulous counselor finds himself representing her individuality and idiosyncracies — against the necessarily gross and possibly arbitrary dicta of the panel. Further, a panel is almost inevitably committed to ruling "ex post facto" on decisions reached by counselor and student in conference, which it can seldom mend except by taking extreme measures. Finally, the counselor of a student in her junior or senior year normally functions in a divisional environment, against which a panel often has little hope of asserting the general educational objectives of the college. The over-all effect is to employ an elaborate apparatus of faculty consultations without finding any firm basis for making general review of student programs effective against individual counselors' misjudgments.

The committee cites these weaknesses in counseling and in the supervision of student planning because it recognizes the virtues of both. It finds frequent contact between students and faculty members, some of it in private conference, to be a virtue, especially when most of that contact is devoted to exploring intellectual issues; and it believes that the faculty must bear the main responsibility for supervising student programs because no other agency is equally competent to judge how to enforce and how to relax the college's educational expectations. But it also concludes from its review of both functions that each can be provided for with fewer hazards to the students and fewer burdens on the faculty. In particular, it feels that a more sharply defined role for counseling, and a more restricted definition of educational review of student work, will save time and avoid errors implicit in the present system.

In the first place, the Non-Resident Term too often serves as a substitute for financial aid to needy students. That is, the college has traditionally awarded needy students remissions of part or all of their tuition, and more recently it has begun to make even larger grants in aid of other college expenses as well. Nevertheless, in estimating a student's financial aid, the Financial Aid Committee has customarily assumed that she will contribute something like \$500 or \$600 out of her current earnings to her college expenses — half of this sum normally being allocated to winter earnings, and the other half to term-time and summer employment. In general, the committee is sympathetic with a policy that expects needy students to contribute something toward the expenses of their education, just as it is sympathetic with well-to-do parents who ask their children to earn something for the same purpose. But it also observes (as the Financial Aid Committee has already pointed out) that an earnings requirement often forces our needy students into winter jobs chosen only for the money they will bring in, while it permits our wealthier students to enjoy more interesting and more rewarding activities.

The college has sometimes modified its earnings expectation. Indeed, when students in dance have arranged to go on tour for the winter, the requirement has often been relaxed entirely, and there have been other instances in which needy students have been relieved of the necessity for winter savings. But the committee feels that our policy with respect to earnings — rather than our administration of that policy in individual cases — requires some revision, even though revision may burden the college with additional financial responsibilities.

Second, the committee confirms what is already common knowledge, that many members of the faculty apparently take no great interest in the Non-Resident Term or in its significance as part of a student's educational program. Their attitude is understandable in the light of the disappointments work periods sometimes hold in store for our students, and it reinforces the committee's recommendation that the very concept of a winter work period be reexamined. But the committee feels compelled to note that if the attitude persists through prospective reforms in the Non-Resident Term, it must have the long-range effect of depriving the winter experience of any college significance whatsoever.

Finally, the committee finds that in recent years the N.R.T. Office has operated on an annual budget that was woefully inadequate to meet its needs as the one college agency formally charged with helping students to find jobs and with exercising general supervision over them in those jobs. Like the Non-Resident Term itself, that is, the Non-Resident Term Office has lacked sufficient support from the college to enable it to serve effectively even those purposes with which it may properly be charged. Here too some reconsideration of the operations of the college is in order.

It is the further judgment of the committee that student social life and living conditions in the student houses also constitute a major problem for the college. Some of our difficulties are undoubtedly inherent in the original plan of the college: we propose to educate students for life by throwing them upon their own resources from their very first week in college, and we have relatively few techniques available for helping those who are in difficulty to get through these early experiences successfully. But it is not only the freshmen who suffer. In various ways student social practices interfere with the well-being even of our best upperclassmen, and the student officers of the houses are often in no position either to protect other students against petty distractions or to help them to find a way out of trouble after they have become involved. Here, indeed, counseling about personal problems becomes necessary for almost every student, and above all for freshman. The committee suspects, however, that non-academic counseling by the faculty is generally ineffective in reaching major problems that most students face at one time or another.

The committee has not found means either to examine student social life closely or to evaluate the role that non-academic counseling can play in helping students to deal with the difficulties they experience as adolescent girls. But it has had no difficulty at all in concluding, entirely apart from any consideration of the emotional and personal needs of our students, that the physical conditions of living in the houses work a severe hardship on many of them. As the college has gradually expanded since 1936, 82 rooms

designed as singles have been converted into doubles, and sometimes in recent years double rooms have even been converted into triples; small wonder that the ordinary sounds of daily existence reverberate through the corridors and walls of the building! If the college is to make no other improvements, it owes it to its students to house them better.

The General Meetings Program constitutes another aspect of the college's early planning that has not worked effectively. Intended originally to be a device whereby student interests might be refocused on problems of common interest to inhabitants of the modern world, the program has long since lost much of its general quality and many of its meetings. Most recently, it has been divided up among the faculty divisions, each of which is invited to sponsor its own speakers out of college funds. The committee has no quarrel with this method of administering general meetings funds, given the circumstances into which the program has fallen as a community enterprise. But it feels some concern that students nowadays seldom find time or inclination to use the meetings conducted in its name either to broaden their intellectual horizons or to acquaint themselves more fully with the world in which they must live.

There are other kinds of difficulty affecting the college than those generated so directly by its original commitments, however. The most serious is undoubtedly our recurrent failure to reach prospective students whom we believe to be genuinely capable of using Bennington College well. In part, the problem may be one of the college's public image, about which the committee has only scattered information. It knows, however, that qualified high-school students have failed to come to Bennington after being admitted, and that they have offered us a wide variety of reasons including not only such obvious considerations as our rural isolation, our small size, and our high cost, but also such matters as our emphasis on creative experience, our social and academic freedom, and our unusual academic year. Obviously, many of the girls who failed to come to Bennington may have made the right choice, insofar as they lacked sympathy with some of our most basic commitments. But the committee wonders whether the image of the college may not underrate our virtues, and whether we may not find in that image additional reasons for redefining our purposes and restructuring our institutions.

Even if our public image were impeccable, however, the committee senses that the admissions process might be made more effective for our declared purposes. We know that we do not know much about the process — where it works well, where it works badly, how it might be improved, where it is best left alone. We know that the comparisons that have been made between student applications for admission and subsequent success in the college have been superficial, vitiated in part by the complexity of Bennington's criteria of effective education, but also by its confusions. We know as well that there is very little feedback from the college to the Admissions Office, so that admissions are affected only in the very broadest sense by the felt needs of the college. And we know that the records the Admissions Office maintains for its immediate purposes provide an inadequate basis for on-going reevaluation of admissions procedures. In sum, we know that we should begin to view admissions much more thoughtfully, much less pragmatically, if we are to employ admission to the college as one way of shaping our academic standards and effectiveness.

Another phenomenon of considerable significance for the college is what everyone recognizes as "sophomore slump." No one knows its cause, but there is a widespread feeling that whereas the transition from high school to college is both taxing and exciting, the transition from freshman year to sophomore year in college is neither. Certainly there is some warrant here for considering curricular changes, the more so if we can devise thereby some means to separate the "junior-college" students from the college at the end of one year rather than two. The committee, at least, is willing to try, because it believes that students who have no clear commitment to completing the work for a degree create a disproportionate burden on our time as teachers and counselors, and so deprive our better students of the education they deserve.

Changing the structure of the curriculum to enhance the work of the sophomore year might, however, accentuate another of the problems that seem endemic in our present structure. The committee believes that even now the senior year outside the major is unrewarding to many students, and it surmises that the senior year might be even more unrewarding if it came as a third year of advanced work without being in some fashion differentiated from the sophomore and junior years.

A norm of four years in college is assumed. Plans to accelerate the student body — or even selected students in large numbers — through the curriculum strike the committee as educationally unsound even if mechanically feasible.

At present, moreover, the senior project often encroaches on other work, with the effect of narrowing a student's interests just as she is most capable of extending them in a sophisticated fashion. Both phenomena point toward a redefinition of the senior year, which must be achieved by a restructuring of the curriculum and not simply by a faculty resolution reasserting its objectives.

Still another kind of problem arises from what may be described as a maldistribution of the student body. Our students' neglect of the sciences, and in particular their neglect of advanced work in the sciences, is often a weakness in their educational experience. But it is also extraordinarily wasteful of the teaching of our science faculty. To put the matter in its barest terms, there is no practical reason why advanced classes and laboratories in the sciences could not be as large as most classes in literature and the social sciences, provided that we had comparable facilities to house them. Stating the problem differently, a redistribution of our student body that sent more students into the sciences would also help to reduce the swollen size of other classes. No one urges a redistribution of the students simply for arithmetical reasons, of course; but it is an inescapable fact that indulging neglect of science in the educational process we have also made poor use of our science faculty.

We have made poor use of that faculty in still another sense. Our laboratory facilities are no longer adequate to serve the purposes of a first-rate offering in the sciences — nor to attract capable students to the college who would be interested in them. In this respect our neglect of the disciplines has helped to hide from us our need to expand and improve our facilities, although laboratories in some of the science courses have already been taught more than once a week simply because we could not accommodate all their students at one time. Any attempt to encourage work in the sciences, therefore, will necessitate new facilities.

By the same token, shortages of facilities also affect work in other areas of study, although our needs in science are undoubtedly most urgent and probably most elaborate. Our theater space and facilities generally are notoriously inadequate for work in dance and drama — not to mention the audience that is encouraged to attend performances in both. And our studio space in the visual arts includes two basements that are too small to accommodate our students adequately. Here as in science our facilities unnecessarily limit our students' education.

Finally, the size of our various faculties is itself a major problem for the college, although not one that can be solved by simple means. In the judgment of the committee, the existence of one-man departments in the college is almost inevitably a disservice both to the faculty and to the students enrolled in such departments. In most cases the faculty member must be spread thin by his responsibilities, while the student is deprived of a desirable complexity in her approach to the discipline she is studying: a small college can be too small to be educationally effective even if every faculty member is a paragon as a scholar, teacher, counselor, and colleague. Hence whatever other changes may be made or proposed in the college, a prompt expansion of most of the fields in which one man or one woman stands alone for a discipline seems imperative.

## II Proposed Changes

In the judgment of the committee, the difficulties and problems it has discussed point not to a need for new theory but to a need for new techniques to serve generally agreed-upon ends. The plan the committee now presents attempts to meet our problems in their own terms. There is no guarantee that it will work, other than the best judgment of the committee, supported by a handful of special studies (e.g., of student programs in the past) and by the committee's sense of the meetings it has held with the several divisions and with other spokesmen for the college. After months of meetings, however, the committee believes that it cannot achieve greater assurance or greater wisdom through further deliberations, and it urges the faculty and the board of trustees to adopt the present plan on a trial basis, stipulating that the experiment will be thoroughly reviewed after perhaps five years in operation.

The committee's plan is based upon a redefinition of the program leading to the degree, consonant with most of our traditional principles. Recognizing that painting as well as history, chemistry as well as literature, is a proper vehicle of humanistic learning, the committee proposes that each be equally eligible as part of a student's path leading to the degree. At the same time, accepting the college's implicit commitment to liberal education as demanding genuine competence in more than one area of the humanities, the committee also proposes that each student be asked to establish herself in at least one discipline based upon reading and writing and one based upon non-verbal symbols. Because spoken and written language are the most common vehicle for defining and communicating human experience, the committee thinks that every student program should include at least one field of study in which language serves as both technique and evidence of intellectual achievement. But because large areas of human experience can be explored and communicated only by other than verbal means, the committee also believes that every student program should include at least one field of study in which these other means are paramount.

Certain practical considerations attach to any such definition of student work. First, a novice cannot be expected to establish herself in a discipline or craft in the course of only one or two years of intermittent work; except in rare cases three or even four years' continuous experience is indispensable. For this reason, the college has consistently required students to concentrate in a chosen field of interest, although its arrangement of the steps in the major has shifted over the years. Second, whatever the paths a student chooses to follow within the framework of our expectations, each should make approximately equal demands of her. She cannot make herself an educated person unless she confronts each with equal seriousness. Finally, because she must be held to a standard of significant performance in each of her disciplines, the student must have an opportunity to choose the paths that she will follow according to a considered estimate of her needs and capabilities. None of her paths is likely to contribute to her effectiveness as an educated person unless in some fashion it responds to her own special characteristics as a human being.

The committee has reacted to these considerations by devising a degree program defined in three separate stages. The first is to be a freshman year devoted to intellectual exploration and the necessary adjustment to the demands of college work. The second is to be the sophomore and junior years as a continuum, during which students are to spend their time in the intensive pursuit of three chosen disciplines, hopefully bringing each to a point of some significance. The third stage is to be a senior year requiring both consolidation of work begun in one of these disciplines and broadening of work begun in the others. What follows is a fairly detailed description of each stage beginning with the middle years, which are the heart of the proposed curriculum.

### 1. The Sophomore and Junior Years

The committee proposes that at the end of her freshman year each student be expected to commit herself to two years of intensive work in each of three disciplines, one of which must be either literature or a social science, and one of which may be any of our disciplines. Thus, a student might opt for sequences in French literature, painting, and psychology; in history, dance, and music; or in physics, biology, and literature — but not in French literature, history, and psychology; nor in mathematics, dance, and the visual arts. Her three disciplines are to be continued from the sophomore into the junior year, and each should normally be a continuation of work begun during the first year.

The committee intends that except in unusual cases all literatures and languages are to be considered as a single field of study, although each student is to be encouraged to devise a sequence within the literature division that emphasizes either literature in English or literature in a foreign language. Were the college to expand to the point at which it could afford advanced work in linguistics, on the other hand, the committee would recommend treating literature and languages respectively as separate fields of study, and permitting qualified students to choose sequences in both.

The committee also believes that each student should be expected to spend between fifty and sixty hours on her college work each week, including the time she spends in class and in conference as well as in preparation for these meetings. Hence it proposes that each of her three disciplines require a minimum of fifteen hours' work a week, and that none require more than twenty hours without the approval of the educational counseling committee.

The role of the educational counseling committee in supervising student programs is described in chapter 3.

Obviously, fifteen to twenty hours is more time than students have traditionally been expected to devote to their work in separate courses in a four-course program. The committee believes that the extra time offers students and faculty alike a valuable opportunity to make work in each of a student's sequences more significant. In its preliminary report the committee proposed to the faculty that it consider enhancing the course-work assigned in each sequence with a wide variety of subsidiary activities adapted to each student's needs: extra reading, special projects, study in parallel fields, even auditing other classes having a special significance for the sequence to which a student had committed herself. Unfortunately, the proposal was stated in mechanical terms in order to illustrate the time that would be available for these different activities, and for simplicity's sake it employed auditing as its chief illustration of the committee's intentions. As a result, some faculty members concluded that the main innovation the committee proposed was auditing.

In the view of the committee, auditing may still serve excellent purposes when a student would otherwise be deprived of an opportunity to broaden her perspective on the discipline she is pursuing. (One of the examples that the committee used frequently in its conferences with the faculty divisions was the student of American history during the nineteenth century, who would surely benefit from being permitted to take part informally in a course in European history during the same period even though she could not make herself a master of European history on this part-time basis.) But the committee agrees with the faculty that auditing seldom provides satisfactory access to an unfamiliar discipline, and it has no wish to suggest it except as one possibility open to students if they receive the approval of both the teacher whose class they hope to audit and the teacher who is responsible for their formal course work.

Here, indeed, is the substance of the committee's definition of extra work: each student is to enhance the work of each of her three courses in a manner to be decided upon in conference between her and her instructor. Most of the time her additional

work will undoubtedly consist of extra reading or special projects growing out of the course itself, and be dealt with in further conferences with the instructor. Sometimes, however, an able student may justify enrolling in two courses in one-third of her program, especially in cases in which she might in our present terms be considered a "major" in that field. For example, a serious student of Russian literature might reach the point at which she was capable of handling both advanced work in the Russian language and the course in *The Russian Novel* in a twenty-hour week — or, with the approval of the instructors in her other fields, she might be permitted to spend even more than twenty hours on these two courses. Again, a student interested in art might justify including both a studio course and art history, or two studio courses, in one-third of her program, provided that she also continued to work effectively in her other two disciplines.

For that matter, a qualified student might well justify dividing her time unequally among three sequences even if she were formally enrolled in only one course in each sequence. In any case, the limit on her pursuit of one sequence would be, on the formal level, her commitment to a minimum of fifteen hours' work in both her second and her third sequences, and on the practical level, the judgment of her instructors in those other sequences that she was making good use of her opportunities in each of them. The committee hopes that — especially during the sophomore year — many students will divide their time almost equally among their three sequences, but it is convinced that other distributions of time can readily be worked out in the give and take of individual panel meetings once the main criteria for student programs have been established.

The committee proposes that a student work in three disciplines through the sophomore and junior years for several reasons. For one thing, experience suggests that a four-course load tends to fragment most students' time so minutely that they have little opportunity and sometimes little incentive to develop real proficiency in more than one or at the most two fields of study. Hopefully, a redistribution of student time among three courses, each amplified to develop that student's particular interests, would ensure better education in all three. Yet reducing the students' normal commitments from four courses to three does not warrant reducing them still further from three to two. The committee feels that our students are rarely able, especially in the sophomore year, to profit from the intense concentration of study that a two-course program would entail, and there are other equally important reasons for discountenancing it. In all likelihood, most students would not be able to choose two disciplines to which they wished to devote so much energy, even if it were proper to let them make such a choice so early in their careers. Furthermore, a student who committed herself to work in only two disciplines would by definition in our plan limit herself to two widely divergent studies, and would also be precluded from dividing her interests unequally between (let us say) the natural sciences and economics, or the social sciences and drama. On the other hand, a student working simultaneously in three disciplines will have an opportunity either to work in three distinct areas or to pursue both a major and a minor interest without introducing educationally harmful distinctions among her courses. Thus, in the cases invoked above, she might take physics and biology and economics, or psychology and philosophy and drama, dealing with each as a significant intellectual enterprise yet at the same time following a preponderant interest (in science or in social science, respectively) during more than half of her time.

As these examples suggest, the committee believes that the variety of disciplines represented by our social science faculty, and to a lesser extent by our science faculty, warrants permitting qualified students to pursue two separate disciplines (sequences) within either of these divisions.

It should also be made clear that the committee intends that the concept of a continuous experience in three disciplines be interpreted with reasonable flexibility. One of the purposes of the distribution of sophomore and junior work into thirds is to encourage the extended pursuit of studies begun in the freshman year or at the latest in the sophomore year. Such pursuit would normally preclude a student from spending her sophomore year in one discipline in each of three areas (e.g. chemistry and history and painting) and her junior year in other disciplines in the same areas (e.g. physics and philosophy and architecture). Nevertheless, the committee also recommends that the educational counseling committee permit a shift from one discipline to another within the same divisional area at any time during a student's sophomore or junior year that such a shift makes good sense educationally for her. Thus, a girl who has devoted herself to chemistry during her freshman and sophomore years might shift to work in physics during her junior year, provided that the change was acceptable to her counseling committee and to other faculty members involved. Similarly, a student who had originally planned to spend one-third of her middle years in history might be permitted to shift her emphasis into philosophy, if it seemed to her counseling committee and to the members of the social science faculty involved that her reasons were valid. The objective is not to prevent reasonable alterations in students' plans but to provide some institutional assurance that they will choose their work deliberately and pursue it long enough to make it meaningful.

Under the committee's plan, in short, every sophomore and junior would be asked to maintain a continuous academic program based upon organized courses in three separate disciplines and enhanced by a kind of contact between her and her instructors that is very difficult to manage under our present curricular arrangements. Hence she would have much more opportunity than she now finds to develop her grasp of each of these disciplines to a point at which it becomes a true humanistic asset. A tripartite curriculum for the middle years seems to the committee eminently justified by educational considerations, and might have the additional virtue of combatting sophomore slump by opening the way to intensive work at the beginning of the sophomore year instead of postponing it until the junior year.

But the faculty as well as the student body should benefit from this innovation. Teachers will gain time and energy from a reduction in class size consequent upon reducing most sophomore and junior programs from four to three courses, and from the fact that every course open to sophomores and juniors will consist exclusively of students who have some interest in establishing themselves in the subject. Because frequent conferences between course instructors and their students are an essential part of the new curriculum, moreover, the college must limit the size of classes, a step that will also serve to relieve some members of the faculty of their present extraordinary burdens. (The committee believes that thirty students is the maximum number a faculty member can be expected to deal with in regularly scheduled conferences arising out of course-work. It also believes that reduction in the size of our largest classes will benefit the students.) If, as the committee also proposes, conferences between instructor and student take the place of most of our present sophomore and junior counseling, there will be additional economies for the faculty.

The committee recognizes that its plan to divide student work into three sequences during the sophomore and junior years may create unusual problems for the science faculty. Given that a good science student may pursue two-thirds of her work in science, however, and also that either of these thirds may be shifted (as, from chemistry to physics) during the middle years of a student's career, the committee feels that the faculty in science can work out a significant program for interested students. Some difficulties may arise in converting present courses into thirds, but the committee feels that they are by no means insuperable. For one thing, many of our intermediate and advanced courses in science already require between fifteen and twenty hours of a student's time; on this basis classroom work and laboratory work together might well constitute a complete third in themselves. Again, the science faculty might divide any third between a natural science and mathematics, or

between natural science and reading in the history of science. Indeed, the opportunities for imaginative planning of a science curriculum that will also attract qualified students into the field seem to the committee highly promising. They will be even more promising if, by expanding the science faculty and its facilities, the college attracts a much larger number of potential science majors than it now admits.

## 2. The Freshman Year

Defining each student's career in terms of a triple emphasis during the sophomore and junior years implies a less drastic redefinition of the freshman year as well. The "thirds" arrangement will permit students to pursue several fields of interest before deciding whether they wish to concentrate in any of them during the senior year, and thus makes possible tentative planning for advanced work at an earlier stage in their college careers — normally by the start of the sophomore year. If the choices students then make among alternative thirds of study are to be informed ones, however, students must spend the freshman year in effective exploration. Fortunately, the college is already committed to encouraging its beginning students to explore widely among the different disciplines before deciding to concentrate in one. Hence all that is required is a relatively minor adjustment of our traditional expectations to meet our new needs.

The committee proposes that each freshman normally begin her college career with five courses, which she may reduce to four courses in the Spring term by expanding her work in those four. It also proposes that these original five courses be widely distributed among the faculty divisions, and that they normally include "Language and Literature" (or its equivalent) and an introductory course in the natural sciences or mathematics. The major exceptions to this five-course program, in the opinion of the committee, should arise in cases in which a freshman qualifies for advanced placement in one or two disciplines. Such students could be expected to enter directly into the sophomore curriculum in these disciplines, but to take correspondingly fewer courses in other areas.

Arithmetically, if every term's work is to be counted as worth 15 points toward graduation, then a third of it counts as five points and a fifth counts as three. Hence a freshman taking one-third of her work in one area (5 points) would take freshman courses in three other areas (9 points; total, 14 points). An unusually capable freshman who took two thirds (10 points) would also be able to handle two freshman courses (6 points; total, 16 points). Freshman counseling might well count for a single point and could be employed to make up apparent arithmetical shortages on the transcript. Similarly, four freshman courses might be weighted at four points apiece in order to give arithmetical validity to a four-course program.

In offering these numerical calculations the committee does not by any means intend an arithmetical view of our curriculum; its numbers are presented only for the sake of those who care about such matters. But its numbers have the virtue of showing not only how freshmen might move into advanced work, but also how more advanced students would be able to make use of the curriculum. For example, transfer students would have the same opportunities as freshmen to enroll in one or even two sophomore sequences, and if they proved to be eligible for three they would in effect qualify as sophomores. On the other hand, a sophomore or junior who found it necessary to take beginning work in discipline — mathematics, say, as an accessory to advanced work in physics — would be able to treat her beginning course as a half of one of her thirds.

A number of practical considerations support the committee's plan to ask for effective exploration in five courses during at least the first half of the freshman year. Obviously, such exploration will give freshmen an extended base from which to pursue three separate disciplines during the sophomore and junior years. (Composite introductory courses like "Six Workshops" and "From Hobbes to Marx," moreover, will extend the range of freshman experience, as will any beginning courses that run only for a term instead of a year.) Again, a five-course load will make possible the continuation of foreign-language training begun in the present four-course freshman program, or to be maintained at the expense of desirable breadth.

Still further, the committee feels that a five-course program will help to facilitate the transition from high school to college by gradually introducing freshmen to the intensive demands that college work makes. Many of our first-year students are obviously baffled by the free time they think they have here. They have been used to working simultaneously in five or more subjects every day of the week, not to mention taking part in organized extracurricular activities, and it takes time for them to get used to infrequent meetings of classes and to our demand for protracted study of selected texts or problems. On the other hand, those who are immediately ready for intensive work may be permitted to select a four-course program during the Fall term, just as especially qualified students may qualify for advanced placement. The test of any such departure from the norm will be the promise a student gives of making good use of her opportunity, and the degree to which her intended program allows her to explore fields unfamiliar to her. If she is already an accomplished linguist, or if she chooses introductory courses that will give her a broad perspective on the college's offerings, she has less reason than some of her classmates to enroll in five courses.

## 3. The Senior Year

The sole justification of both the first and the middle two years of the curriculum, it will be remembered, is the separate contributions each makes to a liberal education for every student who graduates from the college. Ideally, the senior year should be both a climax and a commencement in that education, and the committee feels that individuals' needs should chiefly determine the nature and especially the distribution of student work during the senior year. It recommends, however, that every senior be expected to participate in two different enterprises: one, a group tutorial devoted to developing senior projects in the field in which the student chooses to major; the other, any one of several multidisciplinary seminars or colloquia intended to help seniors to use the disciplines in which they have already established themselves as starting points for exploration of unfamiliar but related fields of inquiry. In addition, it recommends that the college consider sponsoring a carefully planned General Meetings program devoted to problems or methods in scholarly disciplines not normally offered by the college, which seniors would be encouraged but not required to attend.

The committee proposes this arrangement of the senior year for several reasons. One is its wish so far as possible to ensure that the senior's learning experience is not terminal: that before she leaves college she has been encouraged not only to work intensively in a major field but also to consider how what she already knows can open the way into areas of which she knows relatively little. This is the rationale of the multidisciplinary colloquium, which should involve at least one field unfamiliar to each of its student participants. It is also a reason for permitting qualified students to take the "junior year abroad" during the first term of the senior year, when they will be best prepared to make effective use of the range of new experiences open to them.

Again, the committee's proposal that group tutorials handle much of the work on senior projects reflects its hope that seniors may to some extent learn to be independent while they are still in college. It visualizes the project tutorial as an opportunity for each senior to derive what she can from the experience of her equals in years and training, and to depend less strenuously on the advice of her formal mentors.

In making this recommendation the committee recognizes that senior work in the natural sciences will in all likelihood consist of group tutorials not devoted to senior projects. It also recognizes that much of the work in the arts will involve individual

conferences between instructor and student, and that written projects in literature and the social sciences will also require individual conferences to supplement tutorial discussions. Nevertheless, it has presented its proposal in these elementary terms in order to call attention to the possibilities it offers for freeing senior students from the constant and sometimes oversolicitous attention of their tutors, which is almost inevitable as the senior project is presently visualized.

Similarly, the committee urges a revised General Meetings program on the college, not only because there are inevitable gaps in our intellectual offering or because the current program is inadequate, but also because it hopes that the students will benefit as alumnae from having experienced an opportunity to acquaint themselves with some problems or some disciplines without constant faculty supervision. If the General Meetings program is good enough, it should attract the attention of most of the seniors as well as many other members of the student body.

Within these limits, the committee feels that seniors should be encouraged to develop plans for the final year that accommodate themselves generously to individual needs. Some seniors may wish to divide their time equally among project tutorial, interdisciplinary colloquium, and General Meetings program. Others, particularly those in the performing arts, will probably spend half or even two-thirds of their time in preparing projects for public performance, limiting their participation in a colloquium and in the General Meetings program to a decent minimum. Others well might devote part of the senior year to teaching in the rural schools, or even in extraordinary cases — to helping to teach our own freshmen. Still others, especially those who intend to go to graduate school, might use some of their time in formal course-work in an area or a discipline they have not previously encountered. Finally, some seniors might audit courses they would like to have had time for when they were sophomores or juniors. The committee believes that all these and other possibilities should be open to seniors, provided only that students who spend both terms in residence work intensively in a familiar discipline and participate in an exploratory colloquium. It also feels that seniors who qualify for a term abroad should fulfill similar if not identical expectations.

These are the key elements of the committee's plan to revise the curriculum of Bennington College, intended to strengthen our claim to be a first-rate institution. As the committee sees it, the plan maintains the indispensable elements of Bennington's educational method while revising its techniques. It invites the student's eager participation in planning her own education. It supports and extends her academic interests by bringing her into frequent contact with professionals and scholars in the fields to which she commits herself. It encourages every student to become so far as possible an independent practitioner of her craft or discipline in her own right. By the same token, it insists that a student treat each of her activities with the seriousness if not the sophistication that a professional would bring to it, and it repudiates both the undifferentiated quest for "back-ground" and the general-education orientation that usually accompanies it. In short, the committee sees the Bennington College degree as standing for excellence, which it proposes to serve by treating each academic interprise and each artistic endeavor as intrinsically important and intrinsically rewarding. The means it proposes are intended only to make sure that these definitions are observed in practice as well as in conversation.

#### V. Expansion Of The College

The improvements the committee has proposed for the college call for an expansion of faculty and staff and an increase in annual budget in almost every department of the institution.

Guided by its discussions with the several divisions and by its own best judgment, the committee proposes the following additions to the faculty. To make our faculty in the sciences and mathematics fully effective, we should add four members to the division: probably a biologist, a chemist, a physicist, and a mathematician. To make our faculty in languages fully effective we should appoint at least one person to teach each foreign language we offer. Since the committee first formulated this proposal, the college has added one member to the language faculty. We now have one faculty member for each language we offer. To make our faculty in the social sciences fully effective we should appoint at least two additional members, probably a political economist and a social psychologist. And to meet the numerical pressures that we can reasonably anticipate in other areas, we must be prepared to add personnel in other divisions too. In each case the committee anticipates that the president will be guided by the Faculty Educational Policies Committee and by the appropriate faculty division in making additions to the faculty; but the additions the committee has specified strike it as clearly called for on educational grounds.

Our needs do not stop with additions to the faculty. The committee has recommended an expansion of the Non-Resident Term Office; it suggests expanding the psychiatric counseling service, and quite possibly the Student Personnel Office; it contemplates the appointment of a director for the General Meetings program; and it urges that the college award more financial aid to needy students in order to support an improved Non-Resident Term. Virtually the only change the committee has not proposed is an expansion of the president's office — but it has made up for this oversight by recommending expansion of our physical plant (laboratories, studios, theater, and dormitories) to the point at which it will accommodate our present student body.

Within certain limits, buildings and scholarship funds are more feasible for colleges to acquire and maintain than faculties or administrative officers. (Donors can often be found to provide both buildings and scholarships, and dormitories can be made to pay for themselves over a period of time.) Moreover, the board of trustees has appointed a capital planning committee, which is considering both our present and our prospective needs; hence the committee on the future has had no reason to undertake a consideration of our physical requirements. But it cannot ignore the financial consequences of its recommendations for expansion of faculty and administration, which will work "against" increasing faculty salaries by diverting such new income as we may find to new recipients.

For this reason, the college cannot afford to increase its faculty in undermanned fields unless it also increases the student body proportionately. (Increasing the faculty without increasing income from student fees is inconceivable in the present circumstances of the college, and increasing student fees is almost equally inconceivable at the present time.) On this basis, adding four faculty members in the sciences, two in literature and languages, two in the social sciences, and three in other divisions, would necessitate a college of some 400 students. At the same time, increasing the student body to cover the costs of a disproportionately large increase in some administrative offices (e.g. the Non-Resident Term Office, the counseling service, and the Student Personnel Office) because not all administrative offices would find it necessary to expand as rapidly as the student body. We would still lose money as a result of this kind of expansion, however, because every student we admit costs us several hundred dollars more than the fees she pays, and the endowment income and gifts the college now relies upon to meet this deficit would be spread more thinly.

Under such circumstances we might indeed survive, but we would have done nothing to raise faculty salaries. Given its premises, the committee to explore the future of the college might conclude that it had discharged its responsibility for educational planning and that it could not assume a responsibility for increasing the college's income. But though the committee almost never accepted financial stringency as a test of its educational planning, it has been both surprised and relieved to

discover that a necessary expansion of the faculty and administration may be more than compensated for by expansion of the student body. The curricular plan the committee has devised on educational grounds makes possible unanticipated economies in the academic operations of the college, which make possible in turn an increase in the student-faculty ratio that will do no harm either to students or to the faculty.

These economies come from redefinition of the sophomore and junior years in terms of three courses rather than four, and from redefinition of the senior year to emphasize semi-independent study in colloquia and group tutorials. They are somewhat offset by the increased burden that a normal freshman program of five courses will place on the faculty, but the overall effect should be to save faculty time without increasing the size of classes and without diminishing contact between faculty and students during the students' first three years in college. (Indeed, the committee has offered reasons for thinking that contact will be more effective and hence more useful to the students.) In short, a better fulfillment of the aims of the college leads directly to an expansion of the student body; and an expansion of the student body will gradually make possible a substantial increase in faculty salaries.

Obviously, various degrees of increase in the student body would make possible roughly comparable increases in faculty salaries. (Only roughly comparable, however, because it is impossible to add fractional personnel to most divisions or offices of the college.) On the basis of its educational recommendations, bolstered by a study of student enrollments in the Fall of 1959, the committee believes that a ratio of nine students to one faculty member is the maximum feasible ratio consonant with our educational principles, as compared with a present ratio of somewhat less than seven to one. This increased ratio can be achieved, moreover, only if the college meets certain conditions that will be described in succeeding pages of this report; and it depends in the first instance upon faculty acceptance of the following teaching responsibilities, stated as "average" load per faculty member in all divisions except the performing arts, in which the assignment of students to different ensembles and sections according to their degrees of skill makes other categories necessary:

1. One course of reasonable size for freshmen. (The average number varies somewhat among the divisions, for reasons that will appear during the course of this chapter.)
2. Counseling three freshmen.
3. One course for sophomores and juniors.
4. Conferences with these sophomores and juniors (five and one-half hours per instructor per week).
5. Limited participation in a senior project tutorial and/or a senior colloquium. (The average number of seniors to whom a faculty member would have teaching responsibilities would be five.)

In the tables that appear following page 91 (omitted here-ed.), the committee has worked out projected student enrollments and conferences for a college of 603 students and 67 faculty members: 62 members of the faculty in residence, 5 on sabbatical each term, making an overall ratio of one faculty member for nine students. In one sense, the projections in these tables are wholly hypothetical, and the committee employs them only because they illustrate the extreme range of possibilities within which any expansion of the college to 600 students would be likely to fall. (Even the figure 603 is hypothetical; but the practical reasons for it will appear below.) Table I shows what would happen in a college of 603 students if their choices of courses duplicated exactly the choices made by students who were enrolled in the college in the Fall of 1959. On the other hand, Table II shows what would happen if their choices followed an "ideal" pattern the committee has assumed: (a) All freshmen enrolled in Language and Literature or an advanced third in literature in its stead; (b) All freshmen took a course (or a third) in science or mathematics; (c) In other respects, freshmen choices duplicated the choices made by freshmen in the Fall of 1959; (d) Enrollment in advanced work were distributed proportionally among the divisions according to the size of the faculty in each (Music and Dance excepted). Presumably, during a period of transition the college might move from the projections indicated in Table I to those indicated in Table II.

But in another sense our projections in Table II are not hypothetical. The assumption that all freshmen would take both "Language and Literature" and a course in natural science or mathematics, for example, is a practical application of the committee's proposals; and for every freshman whom the Freshman Committee exempted from one of these expectations there might well be another who took two courses in literature or in science, so that the numbers may be very significant indeed. Again, a faculty of seven scientists and two mathematicians is called for in the committee's proposals; what is hypothetical about the projections in Table II is our ability to enroll the requisite number of students in the sciences to support expansion of the science faculty — but not the need to enroll them if we are in fact to offer more science. Conversely, the expansion of faculty in literature indicated in both tables reflects increased demands that are likely to be made of "Language and Literature" and the probability that a great majority of sophomores and juniors will wish under the proposed plan to make literature one of their three sequences. Even the number 603 gains plausibility in this context: it is a reasonable approximation of the number of students necessary to make possible the adjustments in faculty and curriculum that the committee proposes.

Nevertheless, the committee has no intention of recommending that the faculty automatically adopt either a college of 603 students or a faculty distributed among the divisions as the figures in Tables I and II indicate. For one thing, it realizes that the projections are inaccurate as specific predictions of freshman enrollments under either plan, while the distribution of sophomores and juniors envisaged in Table II might never take place. For another thing, the tables represent a faculty in residence and a faculty on sabbatical leave in two different categories — a device that is useful in projecting our overall needs but that cannot illuminate specific divisional requirements. Even without taking sabbaticals into account, moreover, the needs of the divisions might well deviate from these projections, which can be stated here only in hypothetical and approximate terms. All the committee can propose with any assurance is the ultimate goal of a 9:1 student-faculty ratio, and the main merit of its projections lies in the manner in which they identify certain conditions that must be met if the college is to reach that ultimate goal.

If the 9:1 ratio and the techniques that are generally indicated by it are adopted by the faculty, variations in detail can well be left to experience. Even the ultimate size of the college is probably best left open to reconsideration as expansion progresses from year to year, although some clear-cut decisions will have to be reached on the size of new buildings. (Obviously it would have been desirable to reach such a decision before the new Library was built.) But the committee would emphasize that in voting on its plan for the future of the college the faculty keep in mind that it has only two real alternatives. One is to continue as we are, accepting the probability of the college's decline through the gradual disappearance of many of our best faculty members and the disappearance — more gradual but no less debilitating — of many of our best students when they find that Bennington College has become a second-rate institution. The other is to make long-overdue adjustments in our curriculum and our faculty and our administration, finding means to finance our improvements in an increased student-faculty ratio. Merely expanding, or expanding without full acceptance of the principle of a higher student-faculty ratio, is almost sure to be fatal.

# Report of the Educational Planning Subcommittee Faculty Educational Policies Committee

In 1968 the FEPC subcommittee presented the following report concerning the trimester plan, our current curricular arrangements and a version of the "Golden Book" proposal. Action on the report was not taken at that time, but an open hearing with the faculty, considering general educational issues, was held November 18, 1970.

The educational planning subcommittee of the Faculty E.P.C. has met at irregular intervals through the year to explore various possibilities for restructuring the curriculum or other practices of the College in order to make more effective use of both faculty and student time. Throughout its deliberations it has assumed that any changes it proposes must meet standards of educational excellence and effectiveness comparable with those that are now taken for granted; simultaneously, it has been concerned to discover whether there are any promising educational reforms that might also help the College to meet its annual deficits, which have become so great as to jeopardize not only its present standards but also its very existence as a distinguished educational institution.

One of the measures the subcommittee considered for some time was the possibility of converting the College to a trimester or even a quarter system, a step which might enable it to expand its faculty and its student body without significantly increasing its other costs. (On present calculations, a fully effective trimester system would probably "net" the College something like \$250,000 annually even if the faculty were expanded in the same proportion as the student body.) Nevertheless, the subcommittee concluded that such an innovation would create so many unfortunate changes in the nature of the College without producing comparable advantages that it should be reserved for an emergency even more severe than the one it now confronts.

This is not to say that the subcommittee was unaware of the advantages, both probable and possible, that might be expected to follow from such an innovation. Under optimum circumstances, a trimester system would create a more extended and diversified faculty, would facilitate more flexible program planning, and would enable individual students and faculty members to enjoy opportunities for protracted periods of leave or protracted periods of study. In addition, it might serve to attract a wider variety of students, or even a handful of male graduate students on an interim basis, although the subcommittee found no reason to project either possibility as a corollary of a new calendar. Be that as it may, at its best such a system might work well for everybody and badly for nobody.

Nevertheless, the subcommittee's deliberations suggested that these conditions were not likely to be met by any foreseeable trimester plan, and pointed to difficulties advocates of such a plan do not sufficiently credit. So far as the schedule itself is concerned, in order to be effective (that is, in order to realize any economics) it would require the same number of students and the same number of faculty members to be present during each term. As a result, both students and faculty members would be compelled to arrange their schedules according to a master plan that would seriously curtail opportunities for tailor-made schedules. (The subcommittee assumed that individual adjustments would be impossible unless exact exchanges were possible, and faculty members would be more restricted than students because of their responsibilities to the curriculum of their departments or divisions.) By the same token, each of our courses would have to be reconceived in semester units, many of which would have to be interchangeable in order to accommodate changes in the student population between one term and the next. (Otherwise, if given students needed or wanted to work with faculty members for two terms in succession, they would find it necessary to gear their schedules to the faculty's schedules, with all the complications this fact would bring.) In short, the mechanics of a trimester system seemed troublesome enough in their own right to suggest that any trimester plan would be likely to curtail rather than expand freedom of choice for both students and faculty members.

These were not the major difficulties the subcommittee anticipated, however. In its judgment the impact a shifting population of students and faculty members would have on the College as a whole was far more serious. On the simplest level, in a college in which much power is exercised by faculty and students alike, the constant disappearance and reappearance of one-third of each body would be enough to guarantee that our present discontents would worsen. Much more important, all of the informal means by which the College now transmits its standards and commitments to incoming students and faculty members would be seriously curtailed. If we had a standard curriculum, a standard definition of majors, a standard set of student rules and regulations, and a standard administrative hierarchy to enforce all of them, the loss of these informal processes would not make much difference. As things stand now, however, the informal channels of communication help to preserve our most valuable characteristics, and we can ill afford either to lose them or to create an administrative superstructure that will make them unnecessary. In short, in the opinion of the subcommittee the College would in all likelihood lose far more than it would gain by a trimester system.

If rearrangement of the calendar is either impossible or undesirable, rearrangement of the present educational plan of the College offers some possibilities for both economy and improvements. The Subcommittee has explored two main alternatives that might serve these purposes, which it describes here in the hope that the faculty will reflect on them during the summer.

One suggested alternative is the conversion of one quarter of each sophomore's and junior's schedule to a tutorial in her major or prospective major field. Such an innovation might have the effect of reducing the size of large classes (it must have the effect of reducing the average size of all classes open to sophomores and juniors), and it might therefore answer to students' complaints both about the size of classes and about the difficulty of working closely with some instructors. It might also serve as a substitute for counseling during the sophomore and junior years, inasmuch as every tutorial student would have occasional scheduled meetings with a chosen instructor, and it might thereby make extra faculty time available either for additional courses (which would improve the curriculum) or for additional students (who would alter the student-faculty ratio and thereby help the College to meet its expenses).

The Subcommittee concludes, however, that the advantages to be derived from such an innovation are more apparent than real. Quite apart from the difficulty of making such a plan work equitably in practice, the Subcommittee feels that it would have the effect either of burdening most faculty members far more than they are burdened now, or of giving the students an inferior education under the guise of "independent reading" or its equivalent. (The Subcommittee posits these alternatives because of its conviction that a "bona fide" tutorial is almost as demanding as a regularly-scheduled class, whereas independent reading places primary responsibility on students.) Some disciplines apparently lend themselves to virtually undirected reading even in the sophomore year, but others clearly do not, and the possibility that it might work in a few cases hardly suggests that it would work at all. In addition, the Subcommittee notes that a recent experiment with freshmen has been largely unsuccessful, that the College customarily opposes tutorials of any sort for

sophomores, and that only a few juniors and seniors have been allowed quarters in independent reading; the weight of our experience seems to militate against the idea that students would be well served by being deprived of the structure and discussion that an organized course provides. It may be added that repetition to students in a "tutorial" of matter they would otherwise confront in a class situation would be neither economical of faculty time nor effective in responding to students' desires for independence. All this is said without any wish to deprive students of independent reading where they are capable of it and where their instructors judge it to be suitable; the Subcommittee is concerned only to suggest that this plan seems to offer few opportunities either for improving the curriculum or for relieving faculty time that may now be spent unprofitably by both students and faculty members.

The other suggested alternative is to rearrange counseling, curriculum, and possibly even committee work at one and the same time with the intention of producing an overall educational plan that will serve both students and faculty members better than the present educational plan does. A trustee-faculty committee proposed one such plan in 1961 only to have it rejected by the faculty on the grounds that it represented an unpalatable accommodation to financial necessity. The present Subcommittee had examined that earlier plan in some detail and has concluded that although it was excessively schematic it may still hold out the best available hope for meeting our present emergencies without sacrificing our educational values. At any rate, it has used that plan as a point of departure in devising its own tentative proposals, which it outlines below. It has been led to do so, not only by its sense of the financial pressures that now compel the College to explore every possible means for increasing its income and reducing its costs, but also by its agreement with the educational values the earlier committee saw in their plan.

Fundamentally, the proposed plan calls for the division of every student's academic career into an introductory freshman year, two middle years spent in intensive study in three disciplines, and a final year devoted to a senior project and to any other activities (including further work in appropriate disciplines) that will serve her interests as a major, as a prospective graduate, or as an applicant to graduate school. Such a plan assumes that the work of the two middle years will in most cases be best spent in "thirds" rather than the present quarters, with individual conferences between each student and her three instructors taking the place of counseling. It also assumes that these three instructors will usually be able to survey her progress as the Educational Counseling Committee now does, but without requiring the cumbersome and time-consuming operations now characteristic of the panels. Finally, it assumes that taken all together the reduced number of students in courses, the fusion of counseling with other kinds of conferences, and the simplification of educational supervision would greatly economize faculty time and thereby make possible some slight increase in the student-faculty ratio.

The details of such a plan remain to be worked out if the faculty judges it is worth pursuing, but the Subcommittee has developed certain propositions that seem to be appropriate to it in almost any form. One is that the freshman year must be reconceived as in any case it should be, to secure more effective exploration of the opportunities the College offers serious students. Devices to serve this end might include the norm of a five-course program at least during the Fall term, when many freshmen appear to be as yet incapable of working intensively in four courses; some sort of "distribution" requirement or presumption (including a science presumption) effective only for that year; a single freshman panel to review freshman programs; and provision for one-term introductory courses (where possible) to facilitate earlier exploration.—x

—x The Subcommittee is aware that a five-course load for freshmen would increase rather than diminish faculty load, but it suggests that even so the numerical advantages of its plan would outweigh the disadvantages by a factor at least equal to the ratio between the total number of sophomores, juniors, and seniors and the number of freshmen. (That is under present conditions some 130 freshmen take some 520 courses (quarters) in a term, whereas they would take 650 courses under the proposed plan. But 285 sophomores and upperclassmen now take some 1140 courses in a term, whereas they would take only 855 under the proposed scheme — a net reduction of 155 enrollments for all four classes. Four-course programs for freshmen during the Spring term would further reduce course loads.) Without going into the details of projecting the number of courses to be offered or the ratio of tutorials to courses, it is impossible to offer an estimated figure of the effect of this plan on average class size. Nevertheless, it is clear that the plan would work in the direction of reducing the size of classes beyond the freshman level.

The Subcommittee is also aware that courses amounting to one-fifth of a term's work would not be identical with courses amounting to one-third; indeed, this was one of their objects in differentiating between freshman and other courses. However, it is entirely possible for students to combine courses of two kinds under the proposed plan without creating any further disparity among their programs than already exists under our present system, as the following numerical equivalents may suggest:

20	20	20	33
20	20	20	33
20	20	33	33
20	33	33	
20			

100 % 93% 107 % 100 %

Other devices, applicable to the sophomore and junior years, might include the presentation of a Tentative Plan to the appropriate division or divisions and to the freshman panel at the end of the freshman year — the expectation that every student would work in three distinct fields of study, two of which might fall within a single division, as the core of her Tentative Plan; and continuation of the same freshman panel through the sophomore and junior years, but only to approve the changes in Tentative Plan, to resolve disagreements among the three instructors who would normally review each student's progress, and to pass on requests for Confirmation of Plan at the end of the junior year after these had been approved by the appropriate division.

If these first three years were well spent, the senior year could be differently arranged by every student — some concentrating their work in their majors, others making an effort to extend rather than deepen their grasp of relevant disciplines, still others using most of their time to prepare directly for graduate school. Therefore, the Subcommittee has not devised any norms for this final year, although it solicits the judgment of the faculty on this as on other points. It also urges faculty members who are unfamiliar with the "Golden Book" (the Report to the Faculty and Trustees of Bennington College, dated April 1961) to inspect it both to see where some of the Subcommittee's ideas came from and to see how different many of them are from the ideas propounded in that volume.

Pat Adams  
Don Brown

Rein van der Linde  
Rush Welter

# Student Statement on Educational Revisions

The following statement is part of a longer memorandum written by four students in preparation for the Week of Self Study. The students concerned were Libby Meyers, Lisa Bassett, Maren Jenkins, Cheryl Aldridge, and Diana Elzey.

## Freshmen and Senior Years

### 1. Freshman Year

During the first weeks of the year 1967-1968, the Student Personnel Office and many counselors received freshmen complaints that courses were too easy and did not demand enough preparation. From conversations with the SPO and with professors, we have concluded that such complaints are partially a result of the shift from a crowded high school schedule to Bennington's program of few classes and much individual preparation. Nevertheless, we think that in certain specific cases (the most frequently cited is Visual Arts I) the introductory courses which usually are filled by freshmen need to be improved. Many high schools now offer their juniors and seniors courses which are the equivalent to college courses in subject matter if not in method or intensity of study. Indeed, we have found that many of the second year responders to our questionnaire either declared that the only difference between their high school courses and those at Bennington was intensity and carefulness of study or else complained that they found no difference at all. We do not agree therefore, with the conclusions of the "Golden Book" that the answer to this problem lies in an increase in the number of courses in an average freshman program. Instead, we think that all introductory courses should be reviewed with the purpose of ascertaining whether they offer adequate intensity of study to their students.

To improve another aspect of freshman year counseling, we also propose that the present form of this institution be abolished for sophomore and junior years. The results of such a step would leave the faculty available for improved freshman counseling. This improvement would take the form of assigning as counselor to each student one of the student's four instructors. The counselor would also be a member of one of two divisions in which the student had expressed particular interest in her application to the college. We think that this system would generally improve the counseling situation, difficult for both professor and student during freshman year when both are assigned more or less arbitrarily and the student has only minimal knowledge of, and perhaps not much interest in, the professor's field. All of the adjustments of the first year would be made a little easier, and the student might even be helped along towards deciding in which area she wants to major.

### 2. Senior Year.

In looking at senior year, the authors of this report have received three impressions. First, as opposed to the usual senior project, the senior thesis is a private affair between the student, her books and typewriter, and the senior tutor. A thesis is read only by the member of the faculty who is appointed to review its quality and by the students' long-suffering friends (and probably parents). Few other students or faculty members either have the time or the inclination to read these once they have reached the hallowed precincts of the library. In other words, what is already the alleged culmination of four years of study and pain must also be subjected to an atmosphere which appears to become increasingly harrowing and precious as the year goes by and the deadline approaches. Surely the senior thesis in its present form must be the ultimate extreme of Bennington's emphasis on individualism.

As the senior thesis is viewed as the culmination of a student's work in a discipline, so the senior year seems to be viewed as the culmination of a student's entire education. The word "commencement" may infer a beginning to some, but for most Benningtonians, it symbolizes only an end. Since a high percentage of Bennington's graduates go on to graduate or professional school, and since the college professes to educate its students to continue their own education after college, this attitude seems most unfortunate. It occurs often in discouragement of seniors who would like to take an introductory course. It is also apparent, along with other causes, of course, in the lack of interdivisional courses on an advanced level. The authors of this report find this situation discouraging.

Although the senior year is viewed as the culmination of a student's program at the college, (which of course it is) little effort is made to make this year different in its quality and intensity from the others. If seniors are discouraged from taking introductory courses, neither are they offered courses which use their experience and relative mastery of a discipline to full advantage. In other words, senior year appears to be a mixture of the results of conflicting intentions and ill-defined purposes.

To remedy the above situations, we should like to offer several suggestions. First, we propose that at least bimonthly meetings between students writing theses be instituted. These meetings could include students writing theses in the same discipline (psychology or biology). They could include students writing theses in the same interdivisional areas (medieval history, philosophy and literature), in the same subdivisional areas (abnormal psychology, or critical literature), or simply in the same divisions. Indeed, if carefully planned, there is no reason for not including all or various combinations of these areas in the course of one semester's meetings. As they do already in the performing arts divisions, students would be able to use each other's information and/or criticism to improve their own work. In return, they would also learn the techniques of constructive criticism. They would be shaken from any over-reliance on their tutor to which they might be tempted. Indeed, the thesis which is educationally wasteful in its present form, could become the basis for some very constructive learning.

Our second suggestion is the encouragement and actual creation of several new courses. These could be either interdivisional courses centered around a common problem as it is analyzed by several disciplines (e.g.: a course on the development of the humanities). Or they could deal with problems as seen from one disciplinary viewpoint, reinforced by student participants who would be majors from a variety of disciplines (e.g., a course on Romanticism). Finally, these courses would be seminars dealing with contemporary problems of a discipline as defined by several practitioners of that discipline (e.g., a course covering the latest problems in psychology as seen from the combined viewpoints of psycho-analytical, social psychology and developmental psychology theories). The opportunities are endless and the benefits great. Not only would students be acquainted with new problems and methods but also faculty would be brought together in cooperative and interdisciplinary ventures. The educational planning for the entire College might, in fact, benefit from this change in senior year.

To improve the qualities of senior year in another way, we suggest that those seniors who are seriously interested in exploring new fields of study not be discouraged from entrance into introductory courses. Such an arrangement would have the double advantage of benefiting not only seniors but would also benefit the freshmen and sophomores who usually take these courses.

Finally, we suggest that senior year be divided into thirds instead of quarters. Such an arrangement would promote an increased intensity of education and would make use of students' developed, if relative, mastery of their discipline better than the quarter system does presently.

### 3. Sophomore and Junior Years

The committee has spent a great deal of time going over possible structures of sophomore and junior years. Our purpose was to find one which would both make feasible and improve the offerings we have suggested for the other two years. If the present system for these years would adequately support our proposed changes in the first and last years, we would not need to modify the middle years. Nevertheless, after much discussion we have concluded that a change is necessary, and would probably benefit the two middle years as much as the first and last. In spite of some initial hesitation, we have also concluded that the program proposed in the "Golden Book" is probably the only one which answers to most of the problems which a change in the middle inevitably raises.

Before advocating acceptance of the "Golden Book" proposals, however, we think that a review of its weaknesses is important. The introduction of thirds in the sophomore and junior years limits the amount of exploration which a student can accomplish during those years. Students complain now that Bennington does not offer enough opportunity for intensive exploration of a variety of fields. Under the "Golden Book," this opportunity is further curtailed. In answer to this criticism, however, there is also a question of how educationally valid the extra quarter becomes within the context of all the divisions' conflicting demands on a student's time. Is the fourth course worth the time it takes from the student's other work and the poor quality of work which many students accord it? Would not more intensive work in three fields serve the purposes of a liberal arts education better than the less intensive system which we now have? The authors of this report have concluded that probably it would.

Another question which should be raised about the proposed changes involves the freshman year. Would requiring a tentative plan from first year students put too much pressure on students who are not ready yet to decide the course of their next two years? We have decided that although the pressure might be too great for a few students, the majority of them would be able to plan ahead, as long as they were planning for areas of study, not for specific courses within those areas. Furthermore, we think that some form of formal acceptance should come at the end of freshman year. Since the acceptance would be into the college, rather than into a division, we do not think that the problems of over-specialization which might otherwise arise will result from this system.

Finally, there is the problem of the Freshman Committee. The number of responsibilities given to this body is enormous. Most importantly, it would have to evaluate a student on the basis of only one year's work at Bennington. Although we think freshmen could write adequate plans under the "Golden Book" system, we do wonder if the Freshman Committee could adequately judge them. Moreover, between the end of freshman year and the end of junior year, the only bodies which would review a student's progress are the groups of her three professors. We wonder if the amount of work required to make these groups work well is not overwhelming. If they do not meet often, as possibly they could not since each professor becomes responsible for all the students he teaches, then we wonder if the review of a student's work would adequately evaluate it. Perhaps only an experiment with these bodies would enable any judgment of their effectiveness to be made. We advise, therefore, that these areas in particular be watched if the "Golden Book" and our plan are passed.

Nevertheless, while it raises important questions in its turn, the "Golden Book" does answer to many of the problems we have indicated in our study. By requiring every student to spend equal time and give equal attention to not one but three areas, the "Golden Book" both emphasizes the liberal arts tradition of the college and accords equal status to every division. It releases counselors from their sophomore and junior commitments, so that they can devote more time and consideration to freshmen. It increases the importance of freshman year, by its inclusion of the tentative plan at the end of this year. Simultaneously, it decreases the uncertainty and tension which pervade sophomore as well as freshman year and which make acceptance into junior year a source of tremendous relief.

Finally, by introducing such a comprehensive change in program-planning, the "Golden Book" forces both faculty and students to make primary once again a spirit and process of rigorous educational review and appraisal. We suggest that all students read at least the first two sections of the "Golden Book" carefully.

### 4. Suggestions for improving the recent stagnation of intellectual life at Bennington

During the past few years, Bennington has witnessed a marked deterioration in the quality of its intellectual life both within and outside of classes. To improve this situation, we have several suggestions which serve as supplements, but not as alternatives, to our other major proposals and suggestions.

1. We propose the institution of a lecture series which would be more sequential in nature than those we have had in recent years. Such a series would be organized around a central problem, or series of related problems which could be similar in nature to the American Crises series of the 1950's or to the John Dewey Memorial Lectures, which brought notable philosophers to the college.

2. As stated previously in this report, we propose the improvement of the literature and social science workshops.

3. We propose that more faculty be encouraged to find positions in other American and European colleges and universities which would send a faculty member of their own to Bennington in a faculty exchange program.

4. We propose that students be allowed and encouraged to spend one of their four years at Bennington in a "year abroad" in other American colleges and universities which offer courses, disciplines or equipment unavailable to students at Bennington and necessary for successful completion of a project or major.

5. We propose that the college make more of an effort to attract qualified graduate students. These students would serve the college in two ways: they would raise the level of class expectations and discussions, and they would serve as teaching assistants, thereby increasing the variety of Bennington's offerings. Furthermore, by teaching, they could lower their own tuition fees and decrease the problems of Bennington's high tuition while simultaneously providing the college with low cost teaching.

6. We propose that the college invite men and women who are eminent in their profession to spend one or two years teaching at Bennington. These instructors would come in addition to the regular faculty. Their purpose could be two-fold: to bring to students the opportunity to study in a field or a subdivision of a field not offered at the college and to evaluate the offerings of that division to which they would be attached. This program would be instituted on a rotating basis; that is, an invitation would be extended to an instructor in one field at a time. A full cycle which would include all the divisions would therefore take between seven and fourteen years, depending upon the length of time for which the guest instructor would be invited.

### 5. Grades and Comments

The argument over comments and grades is a very old one at Bennington. Partisans for one side or the other have fought each other time and again over a proposal which continues to arise: Should grades be abolished? Generally, the argument in favor of retaining grades includes a consideration of the difficulties of persuading graduate, law and medical schools to accept Bennington applicants and of coping with those Bennington students who wish to transfer and continue their undergraduate

work elsewhere. Partisans of the opposite position maintain, however, that all of the reasons Bennington assigns to the importance of a comment system of evaluation do not justify the addition to that system of the very grades it attempts to avoid.

The authors of this report take the latter position. We would prefer to see the abolishment of all grades. Instead of a grade transcript, graduate and other schools could be sent a file for each Bennington applicant. This file would include a summary sheet of the student's comments from her non-major courses, all of the comments she received for courses taken in the fields of her major, NRT reports and evaluations, and any faculty recommendations requested by the school to which the student is applying. We think that such a system would give graduate and other schools a much better indication of a student's potential and achievement during her years at Bennington than any transcript of grades could give. However, several studies made of the grades given by faculty members have shown that faculty standards differ widely. A grade given by one professor may indicate a very different expectation and achievement than the same grade given by a different professor. Although comments themselves do not escape from this problem, they do or should give to their reader a

much better picture of what the comment measures than any grade could possibly give.

Although we prefer the complete abolishment of grades, we also think that their partial elimination would be better than no change in policy. To accomplish this elimination, we have a variety of suggestions. One of these alternatives might be to have only those divisions which consider the use of grades imperative to the acceptance of their students in post-graduate work continue to give grades. Students who did not need grades for their work after graduation from Bennington but who had taken courses in a grade-giving division, could simply request the elimination of these grades from their files. Since graduate schools appear to be more interested in the work a student has accomplished in her major than that which she has done in other areas, this arrangement would probably satisfy even the most difficult entrance requirements.

The other alternative is to have all the divisions give grades to their majors. Obviously, if the "Golden Book" scheme is adopted, such an arrangement would no longer be possible. If the college continues with its present structure, however, grades could be given only during the last two years of a student's program.

## An Educational Plan by Claude Fredericks

For a number of years the quality of education at Bennington has been deteriorating at the same time that tuition has steadily been rising. The College continues to profit from a reputation for innovation it no longer deserves. Classes have grown inordinately large, counseling and tutoring — once the very heart of education here — have virtually been abolished, and the augmentation of the number of students has created crowded and difficult conditions. Weary of five years spent in committees and meetings that were scuttling one kind of education but lacking a vision of any other, I felt it was time for someone to make just such an immodest proposal as the present one, radically dispensing with whole areas of what have gradually come, erroneously, to be considered necessary and attempting to postulate, with a rigorous simplicity, what is truly essential to a College such as this. Some critics have said this is a beautiful plan but suggest those of us who espoused it should go off and found a College of our own — sending us, as it were, back where we came from, to some metaphoric Africa or Russia. Others have maintained, with varying degrees of dismay, that the plan was Messianic, or at least Utopian and, beautiful though it was, was not to be taken seriously. I can only say that I still think its virtue is that it is concerned with the means of gaining certain goals I somehow feel most of us here share.

The plan itself is relatively simple. It is based on the fundamental idea that not only has the administration assumed responsibility which rightfully belongs to students and teachers but has, in the process, been responsible, along with maintenance, for a preposterously large share in the costs of the College. More than half the budget is allotted to administration and maintenance, and this is not as it should be. The solution is simple. One must radically reduce the staff both of administration and maintenance. Most of the duties of the first can either be dispensed with altogether or done more effectively by teachers whose responsibility in any given year is to a maximum of twelve students; most of the duties of the second can be accomplished (with many incidental advantages both social and pedagogic) by faculty and students giving only two or three afternoons a week to some task of their own choice in a work program. Those are the premises on which I propose:

(1) the immediate abandonment of all expansion and gradual reduction of the student body to 400 with the corollary augmentation of the faculty to 100. Each teacher would be responsible for only twelve students a year and would usually meet these in private tutorial once a week; each student would meet with three such teachers each week. This pattern, however, would admit to radical variation (particularly for dance and theatre) described in succeeding pages.

(2) there would be no divisions. Each teacher would either work independently or would form, in the context of particular students, a variety of interchanges unique to a particular situation.

(3) there would be no curriculum. It would, however, be presumed that teachers would offer, from time to time, at their own convenience and for irregular periods, lectures, workshops, seminars.

(4) the trustees would cede the physical plant to the faculty or lease it to them for an indefinite period of time.

(5) the presidency would be elected annually from among the faculty, to serve no more than one year. He would have a permanent assistant to insure the continuity of the office, and his term would overlap by one month that of his successor, facilitating transition.

(6) the present work of the administration and maintenance crews would be done by six managers of the plant — a manager of grounds, of kitchens, of quarters, of library, of communications, of affairs — (each whom would have two permanent assistants) and by work of faculty and students. Faculty and students would give two or three afternoons a week to work projects, and commitment would be assumed not dissimilar to that given academic work. Implicit in most projects would be the aim of learning some practical skill such as cooking, carpentry, printing.

(7) managers and their assistants would earn the same salary as president and faculty — \$12,000 a year.

(8) there would be only two committees — one consisting of ten students and teachers to hire and rehire faculty; another consisting of ten students and teachers to admit new students.

All this would be made possible by balancing against an income of roughly two million dollars (gained from tuition, investment, and alumni gifts) the following expenses: \$1,200,000 for 100 faculty members; \$240,000 for managers of the plant and their assistants; \$200,000 for materials such as food, fuel, electricity; \$200,000 for items on the present budget that have not, for the moment, been questioned.

It is to be hoped that if any such plan as this were acceptable to the community, it would begin with the next academic year. To do this poses insuperable difficulties. It was stated in the original draft of this plan (I repeat it because of misunderstandings that have arisen) that no person at present employed by the College would now or at any future time, because of this plan, lose his job but would be welcome to stay with the College as long as he wished. No new hirings, however, would be made, and as the jobs were gradually taken over by students and faculty, more faculty members would be hired until the projected number of 100 was reached. Next year, if it is presumed that the number of faculty and students will be roughly the same as this year, each teacher, in addition to tutoring twelve students would be asked to teach a single class of fifteen students. Each student, for his transitional period, would take two tutorials and one such class. Since students and faculty would be giving two afternoons a week to work in addition to work done by present members of the staff, there would be the opportunity in this interim period to build — in a simple way, out of barns — buildings, such as new theatres and art studios, that were thought necessary.

The following educational plan was drafted initially during the spring term of 1970 and circulated to the community. It was reissued for incoming students in September, and has been the subject of informal meetings within student houses.

Both a budget for a college of 400 students and a budget for a college of 550 students are attached as well as a description of the plan in greater detail.

It will be easy to find flaws in my calculations and to point out reasons why this plan cannot succeed. I myself, however, have no doubt that if it can be accepted in principle, we can together swiftly work out whatever difficulties it poses.

Claude Fredericks

### Structure

The College would, under this plan, become a community made up only of teachers and students, responsible for themselves. There would be neither trustees nor administration as we know them now. These existed in the first place to facilitate the communication between teachers and students and have, by some curious legerdemain, become in the process not servants but the masters. This is upsidedown, and they are as institutions obsolete. The present trustees would, it is hoped, be persuaded that the adoption of the present plan is indeed in those best interests of the College they themselves are committed to and would cede the trusteeship of the physical plant to the faculty. It is to be hoped, however, that they would, in the period till their present terms expire, be active in helping to facilitate this transitional phase. In place of administration there would be only a president of the community, elected yearly from among the faculty much as a chairman of a division now is chosen, and six managers of the physical plant — a manager of grounds, of kitchens, of quarters, of communications, of library, and of affairs — hired by the president and directly answerable to the community through the president. Each manager would have two permanent assistants, and there would be a permanent assistant to the president. It is very much to be hoped that members of the present administration would be willing to assume these positions. In any case it seems essential that no one at present employed in the College be deprived of work. No new hirings, however, would be made until all the work of the College, except for that done by the six managers and their twelve assistants, was done by students and faculty in the work program outlined below. Duties of the managers would include instruction of students in the work program in much the way teachers work with students in other fields. The administration would consist only of this rotating presidency and the six managers of the plant and their twelve assistants and there would be no other offices. The community would be directly self-governing by open meeting. There would be no committees but two: one, consisting of 10 students and teachers, for the selection and rehiring of faculty; another, consisting of 10 students and teachers, for the selection of students. The president, the six managers, and the twelve assistants, would receive the same salary that members of the faculty received — \$12,000.

### Finance

A college's health — both physical and spiritual — depends upon a viable scheme for its financing, just as what a man makes and does is directly related to the way he lives. The strength of the early College lay in part in the idea it had about financing. Tuition, it thought, should pay the costs of an education, frugality and simplicity should be part of the living pattern of the College. To be beholden to the rich — whether individuals, foundations, or governments — was at once to corrupt the purity of one's freedom to live as radically as one saw fit. They taught and worked in barns and brooders. They did not find it necessary to build expensive buildings or have competitive salaries. They did not, in consequence, need to spend \$90,000 for a 'development' office. They, in fact, did not wish to 'develop' or be 'developed' but to pursue the arduous task of a serious education. When the College began more than a decade ago to try and compete with other colleges both in faculty salaries and in equipment, it began its own undoing, engendering both a financial crisis and gradual abandonment of all that had made it most valuable. Both to teach and to study here originally used to entail certain sacrifices for the sake of very real advantages few other colleges offered — a great deal of freedom both academically and personally for both students and teachers, and education that knew the importance of tutorials and small classes. The faculty subsidized the College with its own low salaries, and the students sustained it by being willing to study and live in modest buildings with limited equipment of all kinds. This engendered a spirit of community that is now gone. It is no longer 'our' college but 'their' college.

Many of the present difficulties may be related directly to the program of expansion injudiciously begun several years ago. Various reasons have at various times been offered for its 'necessity' (no one is particularly convinced of its value any more) — but for some of us none of these reasons are tenable, and it seems important that the enrollment, as soon as possible, be reduced again to four hundred students, not again to exceed that number, that all the present building plans be stopped and contracts terminated in whatever way is expedient, that whatever gifts cannot be put into capital funds be returned to the donors, that the 'development office' (in so many ways antithetical to what Bennington stands for) be closed at once. Truly good things speak for themselves and do not need promotion. Bennington became the most famous college of its size in the world not because of any press agent's promotion but because it simply was what it was. Any new buildings necessary can be made out of old barns or constructed in the simple ways that new barns, even today, are sometimes constructed by the work program outlined below. There will be no further soliciting of funds, and the president will concern himself with his proper task — the coordination of the many elements of a college.

How then will the College support itself? At first each student will pay a tuition of \$4500. Of this, \$1000 will go to each of his three tutors. (Each tutor, it will be explained in succeeding paragraphs, will have, as the sum of his duties, twelve students he is personally responsible for and will earn \$12,000.) An additional \$500 will go into a scholarship fund. This will create a fund of \$200,000 a year, enabling forty students of

the four hundred to have full scholarships — poor and foreign students, it is to be hoped, to enlarge the heterogeneity of a provincial community. The last \$1000 will go into a fund to pay plant expenses, to buy materials such as food, lumber, electricity, fuel oil. This will create another fund of \$400,000 a year. In addition students and faculty together will give two afternoons a week — some ten hours — to some work project involved in the running of the physical plant — cooking, gardening, painting, carpentering, plumbing, typing, printing, etc. — that fits their own particular tastes and capacities. The 130 employees at present in administration and maintenance work approximately 5200 hours a week. 600 students and faculty working 10 hours a week would work approximately 6000 hours a week. It is hoped that in time such a work program will radically reduce the tuition of all students and that the community might even become self-supporting.

The fact that students must make some active gesture towards their own education and not merely do what someone else — usually a parent — is paying for should in itself substantially change the whole atmosphere of the community. Students, already in the process of freeing themselves from their families, will find the college not an extension of their own families but rather a family they themselves are by their own hard work helping make. Beyond this each person will graduate from the College with some practical skill with which he could, if he wished, earn a living. Teachers who are capable will teach in the work program; if they are not, they will learn a skill along with other students. Students, when they are capable, will also teach in the program. Those who have gained experience will teach those with none. The managers will be in charge of each of these departments and will treat the apprentices as they would any other more usual employee. The quality of how a bed is made or a letter typed will be taken with the same seriousness as how a cello is played or a language spoken. Beyond the merely practical advantages all this offers — and they are considerable — there is the fact that a teacher can sometimes teach as much about writing, say, or history, or physics, by the way he repairs a roof or hoes a row of beans as by how he directly talks about his knowledge. His qualities as a human being — the wisdom with which he lives his daily life — will be in clear evidence. The psychological health inherent in performing practical and tangible tasks in a community that tends at times to become hysterical through too great an emphasis on the intellectual and artistic should be apparent to everyone. There will come, too, a quiet dignity in people caring for the simple daily needs of themselves and each other that is important. Surely no student should think he is ready to graduate from a college if he is not capable of making his own bed, darning his own socks, cooking his own meal, washing his own floor, repairing his own roof as well as being capable of earning his own living and pursuing some activity in life that fulfills his own abilities and is of benefit to the community in which he lives.

#### Curriculum

Financial independence is an important part of the college's true capacity to be radical in the conceiving of its function, and it is to be hoped the plan outlined will effect that. (It should be pointed out, however, that it is not merely a means but like all things an end in itself — a truth that all who believe in inductive learning believe.) Another barrier to a college's freedom are the demands of graduate schools and accreditation committees. I see no reason why the plan outlined below should not be satisfactory to either or both of these, but if one is to think clearly about education, both these factors should be left entirely out of consideration. If the College is good, its recommendation and its degree will carry its own weight and need neither the dubious stamp of approval some state inspector might offer or a graduate school demand.

All curriculum and all requirements would, under this plan, be abolished. There would, of course, be no divisions. In lieu of curriculum, divisions, and requirements there would simply be a group of artists, scholars, and thinkers, living in residence with a group of students who wished to learn from them. Students would come for an undetermined period of time, and it would be hoped that many would have no interest in being given any certification of their achievement. When, however, this was found desirable, the student would — after one year, two years, six years, or whatever — apply to the three teachers he is at that time studying with, and he and they together, examining his achievement and capacities, would decide whether it is time to grant a degree. A vote of the full faculty would confirm this. Conversely the three teachers could recommend withdrawal.

Before that time education would take place in this way. The first term a student was in residence (I presume, for several reasons, that for the time being the same term schedule is kept.) he would do nothing but live in the community, talk with teachers and students about their own educations and various modes of education, attend public lectures, plan just what kind of an education it is he wants or at least what fields of knowledge he wishes, first of all, to explore. In his second term he would choose a project for this to focus on — the investigation of a culture, the production of a play, etc., etc. — and three teachers who were willing to work with him, presenting to them, for common discussion, the plan for his project. The project might be for a term, a year, or however long he was at college. He would be working directly on the project with his chief tutor — a teacher whose own field coincided most exactly with the project's direction. His two additional tutors, it would be hoped, in other fields, would be working with him in material that related more or less directly to the project. All skills — such as languages and laboratory sciences — would be learned inductively in relation to some central project. The importance of inductive learning would again, and constantly, be reaffirmed as the most natural means for all education. The student would usually meet with his chief tutor in private tutorial perhaps two hours a week and with his other two tutors, again in private tutorial, for perhaps another hour each week. But these would be arrangements set up by teacher and student and would admit to many radical variations. A teacher might, for example, choose to meet with all his twelve students as a class for whatever period of time he saw fit. Two teachers might choose for a period of time or for a term even to meet their students together in a class of 24. In theatre and dance such arrangements might prove particularly useful. A language teacher might choose to see his students in groups of three or four. (With the augmentation of the faculty from 64 to 100, it would be hoped that no one teacher would be expected to offer all four years of a language as at present is necessary.) At times a student might wish for a month or a term to work entirely independent of his tutor, and this, too, would be possible. It would, however, be assumed that a teacher had some sort of weekly meeting privately with each student, apart from whatever particular arrangements had been made, and the pattern on which these were variations would still be that of the teacher meeting privately with each of his twelve students for an hour or two a week. This would, however, be the sum of the responsibility — both of teacher and student — to the College, and there would be, beyond this, literally no other structure of any kind except for the ten hours given over to some task to sustain the community.

In addition to this it would be presumed that teachers would, at irregular intervals, for irregular periods of time governed by their own tastes and needs and those of their students, offer various public lectures, demonstrations, and seminars on topics directly related to their own work. A large open calendar in some public place such as Commons would be filled by these events and would be reprinted weekly for the information of the community. A teacher need only write in a subject and time on the big calendar, and whoever wished would attend. Constant effort would be made to keep these from in any sense degenerating again into the fixed curriculum of a catalogue.

At the end of each year the teacher would meet with each of his students and the

student's other two teachers to discuss the student's project, his progress, the possible directions it might be useful to pursue. There would be no grades or reports in the usual sense — but at the end of such a discussion student and teachers might together compose, for their own convenience, a statement about achievement made and problems encountered.

#### Aims

And the aims of such an education? First, not to make something that happens after college but something that is happening as much now, in many ways, as it will ever happen. Second, to learn how to experience life (i.e. to think and to feel and be conscious of one's thoughts and feelings) and how to communicate these, in a variety of ways, to others. Third, to learn some simple skill — like carpentry or printing or cooking — by which one could earn a living. To learn how to care for one's own simple needs oneself and to care for those of others. To learn how to work independently in developing one's own particular gifts. To learn how to conduct one's life. In other words, truly to gain psychological independence and self-reliance and at the same time the capacity to live in a community. Ultimately to learn how, in Sartre's phrase, to save oneself and to help others save themselves from the suffering life presents them with. The answers teachers will offer will be, it is hoped, various, and a student will have the opportunity and incentive, it is hoped, to explore several of the classic responses to the fact of human suffering. The very nature of culture has been ultimately and essentially, an effort to answer this fundamental question — Christian, Buddhist, Communist, democratic, psychoanalytic, esthetic, etc., etc. It is to be hoped that all projects will somewhere bear this central fact in mind and that a student will be considered ready to graduate when he has in some demonstrable way discovered some true commitment to one of these or to some private synthesis of these. It would be hoped that among the faculty there will always be men committed and living the life of their belief, Buddhist, Christian, Communist, etc., and that they will constantly in public lecture and private discussion bear witness to the truth as they know it. The production of a play, the writing of a novel, the planning of a concert, the formulation of a scientific law — yes, and repairing of a roof, the washing of a toilet, the serving of a meal — will always be the particular approach to ideas which in a classroom remain too abstract, but behind all the other activities would lie this ultimate one — the effort for a person to discover who he is and to help others discover who they are and how together they can free themselves from the suffering that seems inherent in the human condition.

Projected budget for college of 400 students and 100 faculty members, based on 1969-70 estimated budget.

Income	
Tuition (360 x \$4500 with 40 students on full scholarship)	\$1,620,000
Investment income	70,000
Auxiliary enterprises (summer rental, faculty housing)	60,000
Alumni gifts	230,000
	\$1,980,000
Expenses	
Faculty salaries (100 x \$12,000)	\$1,200,000
Six managers of the plant, with 2 assistants each (18 x \$12,000)	216,000
Rotating presidency and permanent assistant (2 x \$12,000)	24,000
'Commodities (food, fuel, electricity, lumber, etc.)	200,000
'Items taken over from 1969-70 budget	
Health Service	45,000
Post office	31,000
Auditing, legal services, etc.	31,000
Books for library	30,000
Faculty assistance	10,000
Special Events (films, music, etc.)	10,000
Printing and paper	15,000
Instructional expenses	15,000
Contingencies	10,000
10 per cent of the last two items, against inflation	38,000
	\$1,857,000

\* Mr. Kolkebeck tells me that the expenses this year for 550 students is estimated at around \$110,000 for food and for maintenance supplies (including fuel oil, electricity, lumber, paint, etc.) around \$150,000. For 400 students \$200,000 should be a fair figure.

\*\* Some of these items, I think might be reduced and perhaps one or two need to be increased; it seemed simpler to take for the time being figures cited in the official budget for as many as possible. Others, by necessity, are only an approximation.

Salaries would be \$12,000 for all employees, less expenses for social security, hospitalisation, pension, and whatever else is obligatory; there is, therefore, no entry for 'fringe benefits'.

Thanks are due Paul Dixon and Tom Standish for valuable criticism. They should not, however, be held responsible for errors that may remain in these figures.

Projected budget for a college with 550 students and 64 faculty members (i.e. for 1970-71), based on 1969-70 estimated budget.

Income	
Tuition (500 x \$4500 with 50 students on full scholarship)	\$2,250,000
Investment income	70,000
Auxiliary enterprises (summer rental, faculty housing)	60,000
Alumni gifts	230,000
	\$2,610,000
Expenses	
Faculty salaries (64 x \$12,000)	\$ 768,000
Commodities (food, fuel, electricity, lumber, etc.)	260,000
Items taken over from 1969-70 budget (see previous page)	179,000
10 per cent of the last two items, against inflation	38,000
	\$1,185,000

This would leave a sum of \$1,425,000 to pay the salaries of the 130 employees of administration and maintenance at present employed. Of these eighteen would be appointed at once as managers and permanent assistants and sums set aside for the rotating presidency and his permanent assistant. This would amount to twenty times \$12,000 — \$240,000. Deducting this from a larger sum leaves \$1,185,000 to pay the remaining 110 employees and whatever officers of the College have not been hired as managers or assistants. This would average something less than \$10,000 a person. Staff would be maintained as long as they wished to be employed by the College, at their present salaries — with the usual annual raises. It is possible that even next year some of the 110 might be resigning and faculty, in consequence, augmented.

Until the staff has, by natural process, been reduced, faculty will be asked to teach, in addition to their twelve students, an additional class of fifteen students. If each student takes two tutorials and one such class, in a college of 550 students 1650 class hours are required. If each teacher teaches twelve tutorials and has one class of fifteen, 1728 class hours will result.

130 employees of administration and maintenance working 40 hours a week produce 5200 man-hours a week. 600 students and faculty (working two five-hour afternoons a week) would produce 6000 man-hours a week.

# Report of the Trustees, 1970

## INTRODUCTION:

This small Ad Hoc Committee was appointed to visit Bennington College to form some opinion of its present mood, and hopes for the future. We met for periods ranging from one half hour to as much as two hours with various individuals and groups. The initiative in arranging interviews was left largely to those wanting to be heard and no attempt was made to arrive at a statistical sample of the Bennington universe. Nevertheless, we encountered a wide range of view and we believe that most, if not all, of the major differences of opinion were set before us.

In this report we attempt to summarize the most important differences and to indicate at least a few problem areas which deserve the immediate attention of one or more of the constituencies of the College.

By way of introduction it may be worth remarking that Bennington is accustomed to thinking of itself as a somewhat unusual microcosm, partially isolated from the major concerns of the rest of the world. Many of the statements we heard were phrased in such a way as to suggest that the problem under consideration was unique in some way to Bennington. Thus many sentences began "at Bennington we do so and so", or "the trouble with Bennington is." To the outsider many of these problems seem familiar enough, in only slightly modified form, elsewhere. It may be that in some respects the rest of the world has caught up with Bennington so that many ideas and procedures which were once regarded as progressive or even radical are now the stuff of which the whole academic community is constructed. Indeed, the growing polarization of opinion in society-at-large in regard to such questions as the war, the distribution of income through various levels of society, or the preferential treatment of different classes or groups by the police are now reflected back into the colleges and universities. The result is that many ethical, moral and legal questions which used to be argued quite comfortably as matters of abstract principle have now become matters of clear and present political reality. These facts give campus discussion everywhere an intensity which it has not had for many decades, perhaps even for centuries. This intensity of feeling now threatens to overpower the mutual respect, the friendliness and the laws of civility which used to bind an academic community together, whatever the range of views within it.

It is relatively easy to accept discussions of civil disobedience when the phenomenon seems to be strictly limited to the wooded paths around Walden Pond. It is quite a different thing when civil disobedience becomes hard to differentiate from violence in the streets and seems to some, threatens the foundations of the republic. Similarly, and perhaps more appropriate to the current problems of Bennington, one could quite comfortably accept the cultivation of the arts and a warmly effective approach to life when these were looked upon as a desirable counterweight to a puritanical, perhaps over-intellectualized materialistic social philosophy. It is quite another thing when feeling and faith appear to be put forward as a militant alternative to reason and critical analysis as the major means of conducting human affairs.

Since it is the major purpose of any institution of higher education to foster diversity of view and active discussion of matters of basic principle we were not surprised to encounter such differences and discussions at Bennington. Indeed, we would have been very disappointed if we had not. On the other hand, we must say that our overall impression is that the intensity of these differences has reached a level at which it threatens to overpower the normal forces which hold a civilized community together.

We feel that the situation is dangerous enough to justify a major effort on the part of all constituencies of the College. This effort should be directed primarily to arriving at some commonly agreed upon definition of what a liberal arts education should be in order to prepare a student to take an appropriate and satisfying part in the rapidly changing society of the last third of the 20th Century. In doing so, it should focus somewhat more narrowly perhaps on what a Bennington education should be in view of the traditions and the other advantages and disadvantages which derive from its unusual position. At first glance this suggestion may seem to be so obvious as to be trivial. We feel it important to make the effort, however, since many, if not most of the symptoms of uneasiness and dissatisfaction which we encountered among both students and faculty can be traced in one way or another to a lack of clarity and certainly to a lack of agreement on what the objectives of the College are.

## FINDINGS:

First let us review what seem like the more significant complaints. In the academic sphere the most specific and concrete objections seem to center on what was felt to be the rigidity and in some instances the arbitrariness of requirements for the degree. Coupled with this was the feeling that it was often unnecessarily difficult for a student to arrange a satisfactory major program. In some cases this may simply be due to the overcrowding of certain divisions which have suddenly been elected by unexpected large numbers of students. In others, complaints were made about the bureaucratic cumbersomeness of the panel system.

In evaluating these complaints it is important to bear in mind the following additional observations. There was great variation among both students and faculty in the degree to which existing procedures were perceived as unduly onerous. Some students, for example, found very little to complain about and emphasized that anyone who really knew what he wanted to do and had a reasonable degree of energy and initiative could arrange a satisfactory program quite easily.

Some of the criticisms seemed to assume that all students were equally mature and equally able to select a wise arrangement of courses. Correspondingly little weight was given to the responsibility of the faculty to ensure that relatively immature students familiarize themselves with different areas of knowledge and a variety of opportunities.

Furthermore there was understandable but sometimes rather sharp disagreement about the role of the arts in a liberal education and the degree of intensity with which they should be pursued in an undergraduate college.

Underlying all these comments on strictly academic matters was the uneasy feeling that there is a considerable discrepancy between what Bennington professes to be and what it actually does. These discussions were given specificity by citing the emphasis in the catalog on the freedom of the student to design his or her own program and the flexible "experimental" nature of the College as a whole. As pointed out in the introduction to this report, part of the difficulty may lie in the different meaning such words may have in the context of 1970 and the time when they were written.

Another set of comments dealt with the nature of the Bennington community. Almost all observers agreed that the newcomers find the atmosphere cold, impersonal, and impenetrable. Students and faculty alike seem preoccupied with doing their own thing and make little effort to help or even to meet new people. Indifference to the feelings and rights of others makes living in some (though not all) dormitories very unpleasant. Much complaint was heard about the decline of the counseling system. This included some criticism of the removal of counseling from the second and third years but seemed even more concerned with the decline of faculty interest

and competence in counseling at any level or at any time. Dissatisfaction was also expressed with the quality and quantity of psychiatric help available.

Related to the decline in the quality of community life was the feeling that an inordinate amount of time is spent in trying to operate the community machinery. Committees and Councils officers spend hours and days arguing over minor as well as major matters. Sometimes it seemed to the visitors that the "community" was attempting to make the machinery of government take the place of mutual trust, normal respect for the rights of others, and what should be spontaneous social action.

It would be wrong to conclude from this recital of complaints that students are not getting a good education at Bennington. As a matter of fact, we were constantly impressed with the thoughtfulness, the insight, the sensitivity, and the simple expository skill with which they analysed and discussed their situation.

It appears that the various conflicts and uncertainties both at Bennington and in the world at large have forced them to examine certain fundamental values and principles with an intensity that has not been often observed in previous generations of students. The results so far seem to be definitely on the plus side.

We doubt, however, that any group of individuals can continue a satisfactory productive existence at this degree of tension indefinitely. Indeed, there are signs that frustration and fatigue are already taking a serious toll. We believe, therefore, that the time has come for a serious reappraisal of the goals and purposes of the College and its manner of conducting its affairs. Before making specific recommendations, however, it may be worthwhile to stand back for a moment and attempt to see how the specific difficulties we have recounted relate themselves to certain larger issues which are causing unrest and uncertainty throughout the world and especially perhaps among younger people. Such an exercise may not only help us to understand Bennington better, but also to describe more clearly how it may contribute to the solution of some of the problems which beset society at large.

## THE WIDER PERSPECTIVE

It appears that the world in general is passing through one of those stages in which the intrinsic ambiguities of life are cracking the cake of custom which usually decently obscures them from view. The old forms of resolution are proving themselves inadequate and new ones are being sought. Philosophical assumptions are being reexamined and shortcuts to salvation are being proposed. The basic ambiguity may perhaps be stated in biological terms as a conflict between man's status as an individual organism and his peculiar dependence on some kind of social contract. Out of this grows other kinds of conflicts — between structure and spontaneity, the state and the individual, reason and feeling, faith and works. The dichotomies are never resolved but for the past 200 years in the western world the emphasis has been on structure, reason and works. The results in the amelioration of the material conditions of life have been spectacular. The benefits are now so accepted that they are scarcely recognized as such. On the other hand, the inevitable defects are now becoming more and more obvious so that "reason" and its concomitant technology are being blamed for an impoverishment of the quality of life. Many of our social and political institutions are increasingly perceived not as relatively benign structures achieved after centuries of struggle and experimentation to protect man against himself but as devices invented by "the establishment" to maintain an oppressive status quo.

These changes in society-at-large give campus discussions an intensity for which most people over thirty are unprepared. Questions about degree requirements are quickly seen as threats to the life of reason and standards of intellectual quality in general. Criticisms of course content and curriculum are described as assaults on academic freedom and scholarly independence comparable to those of the McCarthy period. On the other hand, reluctance to accept a major program in painting is denounced as a lack of feeling for all that "really makes life worth living" and an intolerable constraint on the freedom of the individual student to assume responsibility for his own development. Senior faculty members with grave doubts about the wisdom of using a college as a political club may be branded as fascist warmongers and burners of little children. This is not the kind of dialogue we are used to associating with a community of scholars.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

How then can we reduce the intensity of discussion to more tolerable levels? As we suggested earlier we believe that an all out effort should be made to redefine the goals, purposes and procedures of the College in terms consistent with the realities of our time. We can see several purposes to be served by an such an effort.

1. It would help resolve the present discrepancy between what is stated in the catalog and in other official utterances and what actually happens.
2. It would, we hope, make clear to everyone that in a time like the present there is no single approach to wisdom.
3. More specifically, we hope it might provide a statement of what the different elements of contemporary college education have to contribute to the development of the individual student. What does participation in the creative and expressive arts contribute to those whose primary mode of understanding is through scientific analysis and reasoned criticism? Conversely what does analysis and criticism contribute to the creative artist?
4. An effort should also be made to clarify the College's attitude towards preparation for a specific career, whether in scholarship, a learned profession such as medicine or law, or some form of the arts. In an earlier time Bennington rather loftily renounced an interest in professionalism of any kind. We believe this attitude should re-examined for a number of reasons. Not the least of them is the fact that many people find their most satisfying personal development, their salvation if you will, in doing some one thing superlatively well.
5. Finally, we hope that explicit recognition of the multiple objectives of the College and a clearer position of the legitimacy of the several paths to be followed in reaching them will clear the air of controversy and make way for an atmosphere of tolerance, understanding, and security. Once such an atmosphere is established it will be possible to embark on discussions of the details of constitutional government, curriculum planning and community life in a way that should turn out to be a good deal more productive than it is now.

Mrs. Richard E. Emmet  
Mr. Lyle Carter  
Mr. Robert Morison