

July 31, 1975

TO: Trustees, ex-trustees, faculty, Fellow townsmen and some staunch friends
of the College

FROM: John McCullough and Cappy Cumpston, Message Center for Building Dedication

When we were appointed at the Commencement Trustee Meeting the faculty was dispersing for the summer, so on July 3 the attached letter and questionnaire were sent to get their ideas for the Arts Building dedication.

Out of a month's worth of responses, both written and verbal, the following ideas emerge. Some include estimates of cost and possible sources of income. Our only working funds to date are \$5,000 already contributed for dedication purposes.

DEDICATION WEEK

The formal, focal point of the dedication will be a "holy" week in May with all classes cancelled. Performances, readings, and lectures will be scheduled on a visual background of art shows and exhibits. And to quote Bern Malamud, "Let's have food and drink, too."

"Nook and cranny" commissioning of students has been suggested (fresh backdrops for each lecturer, preassembly, choreography along traffic lanes, fanfares at banquets, etc). One suggestion (not by a faculty member) was a modest (500?) fee to any faculty member for any work he or she deemed an appropriate contribution to the celebration.

Certain celebrations originating as part of the dedication can take place before or after it. And there should be a display in the Gallery of all books, musical scores, etc. of faculty and alumni, together with manuscripts about same and photos and letters pertaining thereto.

SPEAKERS, LECTURES, READINGS

Suggested to date are Mrs. Gerald Ford to keynote the dedication itself. Also reading by incumbent poets Belitt, Sandy, and Feinman; former faculty such as Howard Nemerov, Donald Finkel, and Stanley Kunitz; alumnae such as Sandra Hochman and Anne Waldman. Also suggested are Kenneth Burke, Martha Hill, Martha Graham, Clement Greenberg, and Buckminster Fuller.

PERFORMING ARTS

I. MUSIC

Some definite plans for the coming year have already been made. Lou Calabro's Voyages will be premiered May 15 at Mount Anthony High School. Perhaps it can be repeated during dedication week. On September 17 Gunnar Schonbeck has scheduled a "monster concert" in the new music workshop. The entire college community will participate. Henry Brant's spatial opera Grand Universal Circus will be presented in December. Another possibility for dedication week is a performance of Vivian Fine's chamber opera Famous Women and teishō for string quartet and eight singers.

II. RECORDINGS

a. Compositions of Brant, Calabro, Fine, Jolas, Levy, Luening, McBride, Nowak, Smiley, Tucker (are we omitting anyone?) have been recorded (some out of print). Questionnaire could determine whether there is demand for special issue of some of these.

b. Ernst Levy's Beethoven recordings, now out of print, command upwards of \$50 whenever they show up. Collaborating with a group of select record shops, would their customers and ours support a special Bennington College reissue? (Now being explored with record shops)

c. out of print disks by Paul Boeyple, Claude Frank,
Rachinskpatrick.

c. Are there similar potentials in the College tapes of performances and lectures?

III. DANCE, DRAMA, BLACK MUSIC

No real suggestions have been made as yet, other than establishing an historical film library of dance based around ex faculty of the College and the Summer School of the Dance.

VISUAL ARTS

I. SCULPTURE

Using Jennings Lawn, an exhibit of sculptors who have taught here - a stellar list of 21 to open in April and run through October.

A Bennington retrospective, representing the work of all sculptors (as well as painters who have seriously sculpted) at the College could be staged on Commons lawn. The show might open in April and close in October.

Moving, because of a highly experienced local crew, could run as little as \$6,000. Other costs include platforms (so sculpture won't sink) insurance, a critical illustrated catalogue, and a part-time professional coordinator and grant seeker.

Potential income would be derived from sale of the catalog, sales of sculpture, gifts from individuals, endowment from Arts Councils and foundations. An additional thought is that a six month major exhibit would be of great publicity value to the town of Bennington and might generate support from local civic and government groups, now being talked to. A pledge of \$2,000 toward a guarantee fund has already been made by an artist.

II. PAINTING, GRAPHICS, CERAMICS, ARCHITECTURE

During the dedication there could be an extensive faculty/alumni show hung throughout the campus in locations like the Carriage Barn, Commons, student houses, etc., as well as in the Arts Building. This show could give way to the senior show over graduation which would in turn give way to a summer long show.

a. a Paul Feeley retrospective

or

b. an "Eye of Paul Feeley" loan show which would cover the range of artists from Maxfield Parrish to Jackson Pollock who were discovered or rediscovered under Feeley's aegis. This show, like the sculpture retrospective, would be elaborate and expensive to produce and catalog. Income sources would be similar to those enumerated for the sculpture show. It is possible that the "Eye of Paul Feeley" would be tourable to museums.

c. Some seasons away, to coordinate NYC galleries of Bennington artists into a single benefit night of openings for a peripetetic benefit for the College (Help, Help, Erni and Puff).

ANTHOLOGY

A committee including Nick Delbanco, Ben Belitt, Stephen and Virginia Sandy, in consultation with Tom Brockway, Bern Malamud, and Arthur Thornhill, is already exploring the project. The anthology would include our Eric Fromms, George Soules, and Arch Lauterers, as well as the Audens, Roethkes, and other purely literary figures.

The economics of such a book appear formidable and would presuppose permissions being granted without a fee. Even so, we must foresee a 7,500 edition for a \$10-\$15 clothbound book. If a few major new pieces are published one can anticipate sales to libraries.

The defined Bennington audience is those 7,500 on our Quadrille mailing list. A simple questionnaire can test the intensity of their interest.

We should apply for grants to cover the purchase of a sizeable number of books to use as a promotional tool in admissions, faculty recruitment, and fund raising. Reviews of distinction are to be expected, and would be of real value

to the College.

Publication of the anthology cannot coincide with the dedication celebration, though a table of contents can be firm and a sales brochure prepared.

The format of the anthology and the sculpture and painting catalogs should be standardized. Some might be boxed as a trilogy.

GENERAL PROMOTION

There should be regularly scheduled tours of the Arts Building and all exhibits. A souvenir reference folder should be printed and given to all visitors. A guest book (names and addresses of all visitors) should be available at a permanent information desk in a central entrance location.

Once or twice a bus or limousine could be chartered in New York or Boston to bring groups of visitors to see the building, shows, and exhibits.

An informative photo poster should be distributed nationally for campus, library, and community bulletin board use.

NEXT STEP

Will you all add your suggestions and respond to the above. In September a descriptive-inquisitive questionnaire will go to the Quadrille list of 7,500 to ascertain which projects have enough support to implement them, and to uncover other viable proposals. It will be clear that any financial support must be in addition to normal giving to the College.

Please send comments and suggestions to John G. McCullough
North Bennington
Vermont 05257

ENVOIE

If the scope of all this seems awesome.....the time limits appalling..... and the cash estimates staggering.....

I suppose all we can believe together is that

.....the scale is only commensurate with the accomplishments we celebrate.....a fair momentum has developed in the short month we have worked..... the College itself was not and could not have started with timourousness or even prudence; nor is it likely to survive without boldness - perhaps to the point of foolhardiness.

Artur Schnabel's Credo for the artist was "Courage First".