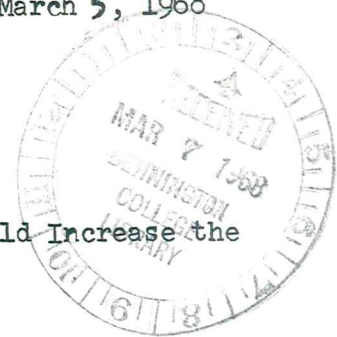


Bennington College  
March 5, 1968

Memorandum to: The Bennington College Community  
From : The President of the College  
Subject : A Study of Whether Bennington College Should Increase the  
Number of Males in Attendance.



As most of you know, the question whether males should be admitted to Bennington College has been hotly debated since the College was founded. As most of you also know, it is more than a little misleading and somewhat unfair to call Bennington College an all-women's college. The fact is that for some years now we have been admitting a limited number of males in the performing arts and an even more limited number in other divisions of the College. Moreover, the fact is that it has been the established policy of this College at least since the question last came before the Community in 1964 that "on occasion" we would accept "well qualified men."

The issue I would like to now put before the Community is whether the College should begin to admit a substantially greater number of males than it has in the recent past.

In order to facilitate the Community discussion of the issue, I am appointing a Special Committee on the Admission of Male Students, composed of Faculty, Students and Administrators. This Committee is charged with the responsibility of studying the question and making a recommendation concerning it to the constituencies of the community early enough in the Spring semester so that the community consensus may be placed before the Trustees of the College at their June meeting.

It is unnecessary and inappropriate for me at this time to attempt to sketch the numerous arguments, pro and con, which have been advanced on this touchy issue; they may be heard in most any gathering of faculty and students and they have been set forth at length in numerous reports. Most recently they found extremely effective ventilation in the February 1968 issue of Quadrille. (The response to that issue has been so provocative that the next issue of Quadrille will also be devoted to the question.)

There are two things, however, I would like to say at this early stage of discussion. The first is that it is important to examine as many of the options as are possibly available, rather than merely the few which immediately suggest themselves when co-education is discussed. Besides the attempt to achieve 50-50 male-female parity in the near future, we should examine among others, the possibility of admitting qualified males without any attempt at achieving parity; we should also examine the possibility of admitting only male transfers in their junior or senior year; or the possibility of admitting males enrolled in another college for a one year program at Bennington with the thought that they will ultimately graduate from the College from which they came. These are, of course, only suggestions of the variety of options which might be possible and I offer them not because I favor any one of them, but

only because I should like to see our discussion of the issue range far beyond the narrow paths it has sometimes taken in the past.

The second point I would like to make is that I believe there is an urgency to the discussion now which was not evident when the issue was last discussed on campus. We are in the middle of our modest expansion and building program and we must soon reach a decision on building more new student houses. If we are ever to admit a substantial number of males, we must make that decision very soon so that it can be reflected in our planning.

I am certain that all members of the Community will extend the Special Committee studying this question their assistance and cooperation and I look forward to a lively community discussion of a devilishly difficult issue.