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THE BENNINGTON COLLEGE RESTRUCTURING: ONE YEAR LATER

BENNINGTON, VT—One year into a major redesign that shook the world of higher education and landed Bennington College on pages of publications all over the country, the College has made tremendous progress toward its goals.

Those goals, set forth in the June 1994 Symposium Report of the Bennington College Board of Trustees, included a number of concepts and proposals for the redesign of the College, among them a faculty who practice what they teach, an academic structure conducive to cross-disciplinary learning, a commitment to innovation in technology and language learning, and a promise to make its education more affordable. One year later, Bennington has progressed on all fronts—a success that has been recognized and generously supported by leading foundations, alumni, and friends.

The College's commitment to a faculty of teacher-practitioners is reflected in new, visiting, and current faculty. Among the new faculty are Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mary Oliver, American Academy of Arts and Letters Award-winning composer Tobias Picker, and writer Verlyn Klinkenborg, currently the Briggs-Copeland Assistant Professor in English at Harvard. Visiting faculty for 1994-95 included actor Alan Arkin, writers Jamaica Kincaid, Margot Livesey, and Pulitzer Prize-winner Elizabeth Frank. Current faculty have been likewise engaged with the world at large—dance teacher Dana Reitz is choreographing for Mikhail Baryshnikov at Jacob's Pillow, for

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example, and music faculty member Allen Shawn, just awarded the Goddard Lieberman fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, composed the incidental music for two new James Lapine plays.

Bennington's venture into innovative uses of multimedia technology is well begun: The New Media Center opened in March; six students produced a CD-ROM viewbook in April; a new Center for Audio Visual Technology was formed during spring term. The Regional Center for Language and Culture, the College's pioneering center for language learning, is staffed to offer five languages, with plans for a sixth; courses begin in fall 1995. Bennington has begun new programs in film and video, media studies, gender studies, and public service, and its collaborative partnerships with New York City performance space The Kitchen and Bennington's Oldcastle Theatre were highly successful. The College has also begun the process of decreasing the cost of its education. These pioneering efforts have been recognized by and rewarded with financial support from institutions and individuals; more than \$5.2 million has been contributed specifically in support of Bennington's initiatives since the redesign began. (For more detailed information on all of the above, please see the enclosed backgrounder.)

Acknowledging that the challenges facing the College remain enormous, including the need for increased enrollment and a stronger endowment, Bennington College president Elizabeth Coleman is enthusiastic. "I suspect that only in the very earliest days of Bennington," she remarked, "did the excitement of engaging in issues that matter rival what is happening at the College today, as Bennington renews its effort to explore and embrace innovative and compelling ways of providing our students with a superb education."