

TO: The Community

FROM: Judicial

Judicial would like to call attention to the current substantial discrepancy between the rules and standards the community professes in several areas, and widespread practice in these areas.

This matter is one the whole community needs to face; it's not just to be left up to Judicial, or Leg, or any other group, solely.

The freedom we have is directly bound up with assumption of responsibility for the common environment we live in. (Cf. statements in the Handbook and catalog.)

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Our Administration does not take on the kind of responsibility administrations in other colleges and universities ultimately reserve to themselves (even though they allow varying degrees of student government); the sort of responsibility that can lead, for instance, to the inspection of student rooms for evidence of violation of rules; to calling upon, or acting in collusion with, the state police; to engaging in star-chamber proceedings against an individual, etc.

We would not want to see Bennington's unique commitment to student responsibility for student life jeopardized by abdication, in effect, on the part of the students. Yet one effect of the present wide gap between the community's stated standards and much current practice is to put considerable pressure on the Administration.

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The basis of standards and regulations the community has adopted are a secret to no one:

Our objective as individuals within this community is to create and maintain an environment most favourable to pursuing the things we're here for.

In view of this, the following reconsiderations seem most appropriate now:

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Conditions appropriate to creating an optimum environment for breadth of experience, of activities, of creativity, are not of the same order as what any one might want for oneself; nor are they necessarily the same as what one might agree on as conditions for living with a roommate, or suitemates, or housemates. These conditions are properly a community affair, even in those instances where discussion and voting on a house basis seem most appropriate to the resolution of a particular issue.

In accepting membership in this community, each of us has in effect signified a willingness to give up absolute freedom of choice, to assume voluntarily a commitment to the community that -- on this basis of multiple commitment -- makes available to us a greater range of effective freedom to develop our potentials, than we would have if entirely on our own.

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Some specific instances in which reevaluation and perhaps revision of rules and standards are of immediate and obvious concern:

--Current practice regarding hours for men in rooms would suggest the logical course of action to be abolition of those hours. If this should prove not to be in accord with community interest either academically or socially, then perhaps revision of extant rules would eliminate the double-standard activities currently prevalent on campus.

--With regard to liquor, drugs, traffic violations, and other issues involving students with the laws of outside communities, Judicial would suggest that perhaps the following statement of college policy would be more congruent with student beliefs:

"The relationship a girl formulates to state and federal laws is her own. The college must of course reserve the right to move to protect itself whenever it seems necessary, i.e., when a girl's activities with regard to those relationships threaten to disturb the College community."

--Check-up, sign-out, and other similarly oriented procedures are often flaunted by community members. This would seem to suggest that reevaluation of these institutions is immediately necessary, and should come from the students, who are the community members disturbed by the policies.

These are only a few of the issues which must be considered by the Community, and our suggested solutions are only a few among the possible answers to student discontent as it is evidenced in largely unspoken disavowal of current rules and standards.

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What we are calling for is some serious, rational deliberation about the place and nature of regulations in this community that is fundamentally concerned with the opportunities for learning and doing and being of its individual members in an atmosphere of freedom and responsibility.

It is our judgment that it would be dangerous for the community for the present extensive disregard of the gap between formal profession and actual practice to continue. There is no excuse for apathy: the choices are ours to make. Some choice is inescapable (if only by default), and we are kidding ourselves if we think it is not.

This Galley will come out again in the Fall, at which time Community and House meetings will be held to further thought and discussion.