

Bennington College: an introduction

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an introduction



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Without really trying to, we have somehow imposed on colleges and universities all through the country the acceptance of our belief that what we do (at Bennington) matters a great deal. The College is regarded with an odd combination of respect and suspicion, as though other facilities thought they might learn something from us, but that the something might be upsetting to learn. It is quite usual for people at other places to measure their own institutions a little nervously against Bennington, while by reason of our conceit or our own complacency or, hopefully, something better, we never make the reverse relation.

Howard Nemerov
poet, former teacher



Bennington is a liberal arts college, dedicated to the study and practice of the arts, sciences, and humanities. But more than this, Bennington is a college committed to an idea: that education is the process of an individual's self-development, a process as specific as the individual engaged in it and as broad as the world in which it takes place. In carrying out this idea, students at Bennington examine and select values appropriate to themselves, acquire the skills to express these values in creative and coherent ways, and develop the strengths to hold to them in a changing, imperfect world.

In 1932, the College's first president, Robert Leigh, articulated the Bennington Idea in the form of ten statements of principle. They appear on the following pages and, although the language may seem dated, the thoughts are still at home here.

The College's historical allegiance to its Idea and its commitment to the principles of progressive education contained in the Leigh statement have resulted in Bennington's extraordinary history. It followed tradition where history was wise but was unafraid of innovation in the service of its Idea. Incorporation of the arts into the formal curriculum; institution of a term of off-campus work; the absence of required courses, of grades, of the

The Bennington Idea

strict regulation of social comportment—all these came together for the first time at Bennington.

Today, the College remains true to its progressive roots, and provides its students with an opportunity to fulfill the promise of Thoreau's observation, "We are constantly invited to be what we are." Through rigorous study and the acquisition of information and technique on the one hand, and a sustained productive effort and vigorous personal expression on the other, Bennington's 600 students and 85 faculty constantly pursue both the expansion and expression of the self. This pursuit is not without missteps and hesitations, for a certain danger always accompanies exploration of the unknown. But all who work at it share the fruits of greater knowledge of self and a better understanding of the world.

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;

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;

Such educational self-dependence can be developed most effectively if the student works at tasks which have meaning, significance, or interest to him;

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.

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;

Direct experiences—planning, organizing, manipulating, constructing, and investigating—in cooperation with book learning and the acquisition of knowledge are valuable means for developing permanent interests pursued without the necessity of external compulsion;

Aims of Bennington College

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.

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;

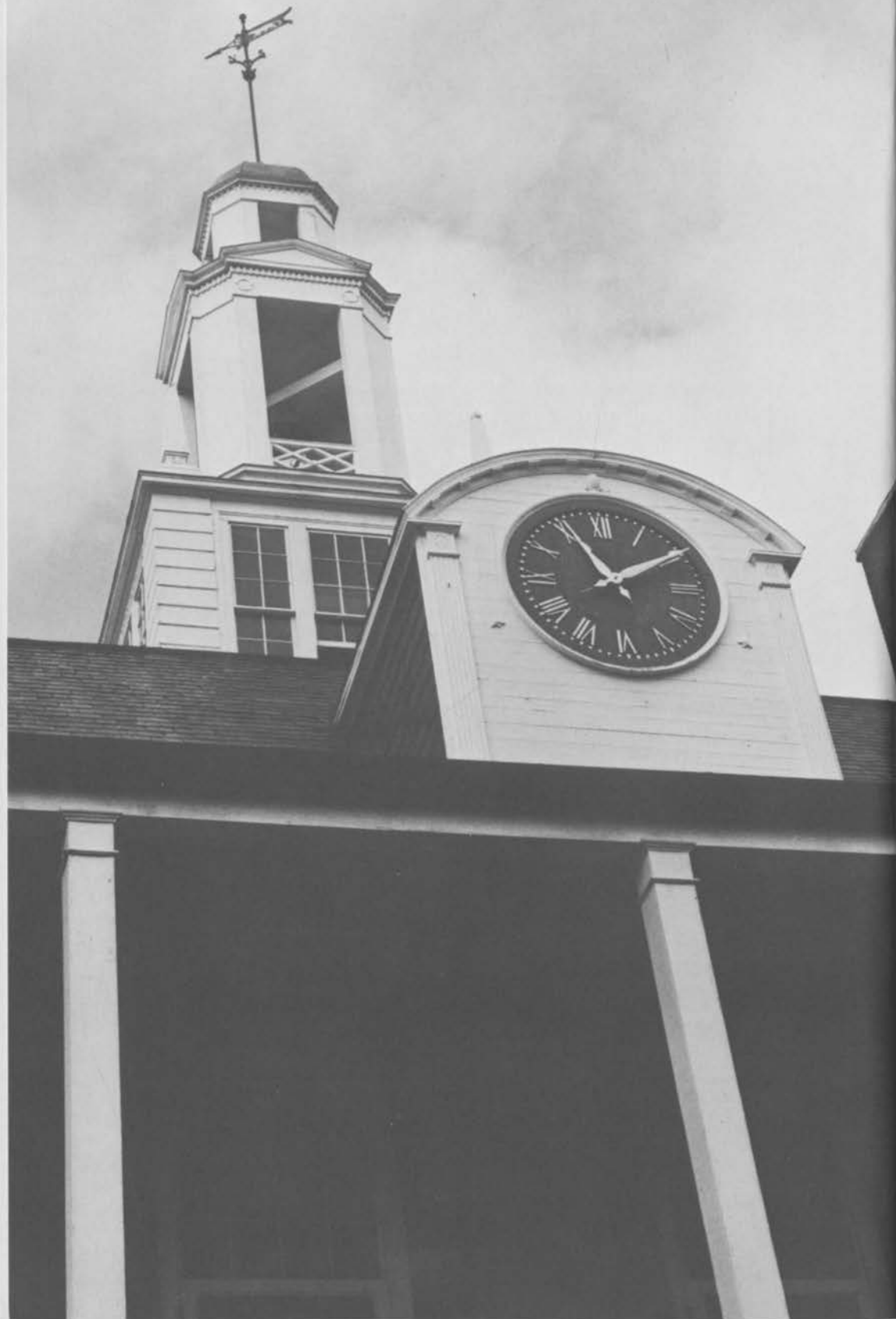
Intellectual development cannot and should not be isolated from the development of the whole personality, and that as far as possible the general College arrangements, especially individual guidance, should give proper weight to physical, emotional, moral, and aesthetic as well as to intellectual factors in personal growth;

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 cooperation 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 judgements towards the strange and the new, and tolerance towards persons and customs alien to the student's own experience.

Robert Devore Leigh—Bennington, 1932

In the end, you find yourself doing many of the same things you would do in any traditional program. The difference here is not in the tasks themselves but in your reason for doing them. Bennington is not an escape from all that is routine, discipline or technique. They exist here, but not in isolation, not taught as mindless exercises in rote memory and scholastic patience. Rather, you see the less fascinating aspects of a subject as they are integrated into the larger whole, and their importance to the larger product becomes self-evident. You want to develop the technical skills because it is the only way to accomplish the task. And it is always assumed you want to accomplish a task, some task, any task.

Carol Raskind



While students here as everywhere engage in the usual pastimes of physical and social recreation, the center of gravity at Bennington is the curriculum itself. The heart of the College is in the confrontation of student, teacher and idea, whether that occurs in a tutorial or a workshop, around a classroom table or over coffee at the snack bar. Exploration and expression, learning and doing, are continuous; no classroom bells divide work from life at Bennington.

Teaching at Bennington is done by the method that will best serve the subject matter at hand. Lectures, discussions, conferences and tutorials are all used. Direct communication between teacher and student is maintained by small classes and numerous conferences, and insured by a student-faculty ratio of less than nine to one. In all fields, the aim is to teach the student how to deal with the subject at hand by a critical approach which necessitates independent thinking. This is achieved in the sciences by laboratory and field experimentation; in the humanities by reading, discussion and writing; and in the arts by creation, composition and performance.

The particular set of courses offered at Bennington at any given time results from faculty-student interaction. No specific courses are required to be taken or taught. Faculty teach

Curriculum 11

material of interest to them and to students they judge qualified. Students with interests that fall outside of courses offered request tutorials, individually or in groups. The availability of tutorials is fundamental to Bennington's idea of education, as the epitome of self-directed study in the service of coherent personal growth. They allow a student and a faculty member to explore and confront ideas in a process at once carefully planned and immediately spontaneous. Tutorials reflect Bennington's commitment to study as open-ended and specifically directed for student and teacher alike.

Direct consultation between students and prospective instructors is a necessary part of registration and another field of exercise for independent growth. The student's relation to the curriculum, as to his education as a whole, must always be an active one.

A curriculum which conforms to the aims and methods implicit in the Bennington Idea does not seek final formulation. Room must be left for the incorporation of new knowledge and techniques and for the modification of the old in terms of developing student and faculty interests. Continuous review of the curriculum is demanded by Bennington's educational plan. The goal is a community in which students and faculty are free to do the best and most disciplined work they can; the means to this goal are constantly evolving.

Whenever I'm asked to read or guest-teach elsewhere, I return with a renewed conviction as to Bennington's excellence; we never look better than by comparison. It has something to do with a sense of shared enterprise, something to do with the intensity of application here, and—for me at least—with the sheer beauty of place. And a sense of possibility, that nothing's too much to expect. It's hard to define but easy to recognize, and this makes me grateful.

Nicholas Delbanco
novelist, teacher





Michael Connolly

Bennington generates an optimism and idealistic striving towards perfection. Because we operate from a firm positive base, we are able to withstand the shock of criticism and frustration. In fact, we depend upon the recognition and response to failure and imperfection as a means to self-improvement.



Organization of the Curriculum

The curriculum of the College is grouped into eight divisions: Black Music, Dance, Drama, Literature and Languages, Music, Natural Science and Mathematics, Social Science, and Visual Arts. The divisions are further divided into disciplines (for example: history, psychology and so forth in Social Science; painting, ceramics and so forth in Visual Arts). A student may concentrate in any division, or may construct a program that crosses divisional lines (for example: Interdivisional in Dance and Drama, or Science and Music). The descriptions which follow offer an insight to the working philosophy of the College.

16 Black Music

The arts at Bennington have always embraced the critical and the contemporary in artistic expression. Black Music is an example of this tradition. Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor: the evolving musical tradition embodied in these and other practitioners is the focus of attention for the division. Courses are offered in aesthetics, history, ensemble training, instrumental instruction, composition and improvisation. Two goals predominate: to make the student more aware of the influence black music has had on all contemporary, and particularly American, music; and to train the performer to participate more deeply in the appreciation, creation and performance of the music.

Thus, the division includes two related but distinct areas: appreciation and performance. The former includes courses in aesthetics and criticism which are open to all students, regardless of previous musical experience. It is difficult to recognize as an art form a music that has emerged from a very oppressed "subculture." These courses focus on an understanding of the black aesthetic, through broad exposure to the tradition as a whole and detailed studies of the work of some of black music's influential innovators. Other topics explored are the musics of African, Middle Eastern and Caribbean traditions.

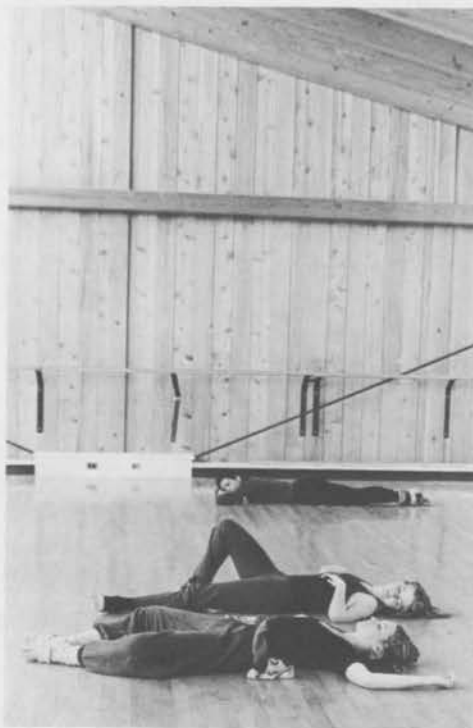
Performance takes place in the various ensembles; every effort is made to place students in ensembles appropriate to their abilities. Ensembles are offered for percussion, strings and reeds, in small and large groups; here is the intersection of composition and improvisation. Ideally all compositions should sound improvised, as should all improvisations sound composed—not forgetting, of course, that spontaneity is the magic word. The materials to be explored include the use of line, rhythm, the organization of textures, composition as performance, various aspects and attitudes about notation; in short, a thorough examination of the techniques of musical expression. Performances are frequent throughout the term.



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This environment fosters a generous and open exploration of new modes of movement and expression—one must be physically skilled to equal the possibilities here.



Dance

The Dance Division bears a continuing commitment to the original premise on which the field of modern dance was founded: a high regard for the unique development of all students, who may become dancers or choreographers or both.

There are techniques, methods, even traditions at this stage, which we acknowledge and respect. While feeling responsible to the ideas of our former mentors and teachers, we are concerned with process and change and the recurring need to begin all over again, to make a fresh start with lesser known ways and means. Bennington's history contains a whole stream of ideas, activities and work created by countless numbers of students and teachers over many years. Musicians and designers are as much a part of this history as are the dancers and choreographers.

The influence of technology has resulted in a great deal of experimentation with video broadcasting and recording. Some quite fascinating pieces have been created especially for this medium. Video also has a more obvious value as a dance teaching tool in its ability to document work and performances.

All students studying dance at Bennington are involved in the making of movement pieces and dances of their own. Students who become dance majors are required to create and present publicly three independent projects during their last four terms at the College.

Four years is a very short span of time for the study of anything—and most particularly dance. In whatever ways we can devise, students and teachers at Bennington endeavor to make their study and practice of dance as real and immediate as time and circumstances will permit. We strive for technical strength and freedom, physical and aesthetic sensitivity and creative expression. We feel a responsibility at Bennington to teach and experience dance as a performing art. It is easy—and sometimes very tempting—to confuse the study of dance with other things, for instance, with exercise, therapy, meditation or sheer physical fun. Dance is, of course, a relative of all of these areas—but considerably more. It is a communicative art form which necessitates an awareness of audience and a sense of occasion and presentation, a certain personal risk-taking in the making and performing of one's own work. These are the areas of work in dance that are given our greatest attention at Bennington.

Drama

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To study theatre at Bennington is to join a faculty of professional performers, learn from them the theory and craft of their art, and carry that knowledge onto a stage. Because a true understanding of theatre can never be abstract, the division emphasizes performance as the crucible for each student's ideas and abilities.

Productions take many forms. Playwrights have the valuable and rare opportunity to see their work unfold on stage, either in workshops or full-scale productions. Student-directed plays offer both performers and directors a chance to test their craft before an audience. Productions directed by the faculty amplify the theatre's professional demands in an atmosphere of experimentation. The rehearsal room, costume shop, drawing board, makeup table, and typewriter can be part of each drama student's experience—whether on the introductory or advanced level. Students and faculty embrace the process of creating a dramatic work as much as its realization.

To prepare for performance, students are offered courses in voice, mime, speech and dance for the actor. A study of theatre history, through its literature and theory, anchors the drama student's creative efforts. A variety of acting classes focus on different approaches to role preparation and interpretation. Students of directing study with visiting professionals in the field. Exploration of all areas of stagecraft and design is carried out through courses in set, costume and lighting design.

Because theatre is above all a cooperative art, the special talents of students not majoring in drama are an important contribution. Music students may be asked to score or perform for a play, dancers to choreograph, architects to design. There is open casting for some productions. The cross-pollination so hard to coax from a large institution's student body is abundant here, and valued.

Visiting directors, playwrights and theatre professionals contribute further to a student's understanding of dramatic arts. Individual tutorials are often arranged when a student has a special need, and the curriculum's production-oriented structure fosters diversity in performance, style and interpretation.

Weekly workshops give students a chance to share their works-in-progress with other members of the division. A drama major's final term is generally spent working on a senior project in acting, directing, design or playwriting which will crystallize the skills and training acquired.



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Theatre at Bennington is the product of a commitment to the art and a love of the process involved in learning that art. We don't mount Broadway productions—that is not our function. We fight for our lives, fall flat on our faces, work hard and work well.

Shawn MacKenzie



My study of literature at Bennington has fostered an awareness of language I can only call obsessive. So much the better.

Nicholas Stephens

22



Doug Cumming

The student of literature, when caught up in oversized intro. classes (oversized for Bennington), or isolated in the bell jar of a senior thesis, may lose sight of the division's overall value. The division is small, but it makes up in wit what it lacks in width. The student must find his mentor, which takes time. The classes themselves do not often crackle with the wild surmise of first looking into Chapman's Homer. But eventually the literature student will work with a poet, or a novelist, or a critic, and might, with luck, hit on the gist of the Word.

No, we don't commune with the ghost of Theodore Roethke. Nor do we all swing birches. When we do our best work, we forget where we are.

Literature and Languages

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The Literature and Languages Division at Bennington expects initiative, independence and hard work from its students; in return, it offers them the instruction and guidance of a fine faculty. The variables of this exchange (the key word is hard work) include the availability of tutorials, writing workshops, a faculty that understands teaching is only preaching unless its dominant mode is dialogue, and an approach to literature that accords traditionally "creative" endeavors—prose fiction, poetry and playwriting—equal academic status with critical and historical study.

An important goal of the division is to enable the student to narrow the gap between conception and execution, between emotion and expression. To this end, the division seeks to acquaint its students with as much of the history of literature as it reasonably can and, more importantly, to equip its students with the scholarly habits which will enable them to acquire for themselves the knowledge and techniques that are necessary to their interests. If there is a single exhortation that summarizes the literature faculty's attitude to the study of literature, it is, Write! Like Emerson's American scholar, a student at Bennington is expected to read first of all for inspiration, only secondly for information. The information, of course, is necessary and the student will find little patience for slovenly work hiding behind the banner of "creativity" or undisciplined self-expression.

The study of foreign languages is not regarded as a separate endeavor, but rather embodies the aims of the division transposed to another key. Instruction is offered in French, Spanish, German and Russian, at all levels of proficiency. The goals of fluency in speaking, reading and writing are both considered worthwhile in themselves and conceived as tools for the deeper understanding of world literature and culture.

The student will find the Bennington Idea of education mirrored small in the Literature and Languages Division, and the prevalence of interdisciplinary studies which reflect current scholarly interests are only some of the more obvious ways in which Bennington seeks to develop, not instill, its students' interests. With a faculty whose developing scholarly and artistic interests fire their own as well as their students' enthusiasm, and a group of dedicated, talented students whose commitment to literature results in exciting, thoughtful classes and work, the Literature and Languages Division, like Bennington College itself, is an experiment in creative education.

Music

The aim of Bennington's music program is a complete experience in the active practice of music. The faculty believes that genuine musicianship requires the constant interaction of three crafts: composing, performance and the design/construction of musical instruments. To this end, students work at original composing, while studying instrumental performance and singing, and pursuing practical investigations into the mechanics of musical instruments. It should be emphasized that these musical practices are made available, within a class format, to all students, regardless of musical background.

The broad term "composing" embodies the practical application of the techniques ordinarily considered separately as harmony, counterpoint and orchestration. At Bennington, even at the elementary levels, composing goes beyond exercises in abstract technique; it is valued as a powerful vehicle both for individual expression and for providing insights into the mind of the master composer.

Devices of composition essential to all periods are subjects of study. However, the idioms first encountered by the student composer, and those generally stressed, are representative of twentieth century language and thought.

Believing that student composers are entitled to hear their own music as soon as possible, the faculty makes every effort to insure that all student work, whether brief or extended, is properly rehearsed and, where appropriate, performed and recorded.

In vocal and instrumental study, training and performance are looked upon not as obstacle courses in musical gymnastics, but as immediate and concrete means of analyzing musical literature, and of experiencing musical tradition at first hand. The faculty places a high value on the musical insights and interactions afforded in the study of chamber music, and as students develop the needful technical skills, they become involved in group playing as an essential part of their performance program. Joint participation of students with faculty in large and small chamber music groups, both in class and in concert, is frequent. In all performance projects, whether of the established repertory or of student work, instruction is aimed at developing the student's initiative and resources.

Bennington's extensive schedule of public concerts includes group and solo events presented by the faculty, by students alone, by students and faculty together, and with the collaboration of visiting artists—the latter often appearing also as participating guests in classes. Programs are purposely chosen to demonstrate as many different periods and genres as possible, with frequent presentation of contemporary music, including new works in all categories by students and faculty.

The division's essential requirement of its majors is a substantial representation of advanced work, both in performance and composition. Both areas of study require extended and continuous application over a sequence of years.

We feel here that a musician who leads his own active musical life, and who is animated by a contagious enthusiasm in his work, can transmit what he has learned first-hand. If there are students who can be inspired to cultivate an inventive imagination of what future music is going to be like or is in the process of becoming, this is the way. . . .

Henry Brant
composer, teacher



Music at Bennington is a unique experience. Mastery of the art and craft of music is of utmost importance, but there is a special emphasis on rediscovering what music is. Bennington has shown me that music is composition; whether writing an original piece or reviving what someone 200 years ago put down on paper. There is the attempt to bring music off the paper and into the air—music is not notes on a staff, it is vibrations in the air.

Stephen Smith





Miles Belgrade

At the present, the math enrollment amounts to a growing handful—average class size beyond first year calculus is about four or five, and classes often take the form of tutorials. So don't look too despairingly at the lack of courses listed in the catalog. This spring, in addition to what is listed, there is a group tutorial in abstract algebra, a course in complex function theory, and a tutorial in advanced topics in analysis (e.g., integral equations, Lebesgue Integration and elementary functional analysis). Considering the fact that there are presently no more than three mathematics majors at Bennington, I think one can get an idea of how flexible and complete the math program really is.

Natural Science and Mathematics

Science at Bennington is an integral part of liberal education. Students will seek to acquire that scientific literacy which will allow them to participate constructively and responsibly in the affairs of modern society. The curriculum is designed to offer the student a critical understanding of the scientist's approach to knowledge as well as an insight into the physical environment and biological nature. It grows out of the conviction that knowledge in the sciences enlarges the student's understanding of man in all of his activities.

Students are encouraged to acquire a feeling for science as an evolving and self-correcting discipline which creates hypotheses and extracts theories. Emphasis is on process reality rather than on static reality. Not all sciences see the world in the same way, but they all do begin with the same point of view. It is this basic unity of the scientific view that all science students are encouraged to examine. As a result of this orientation, study is less an exercise in the memorization and digestion of data than immersion in a process of investigation. Although there is no substitute for mastery of a body of knowledge, students in science as elsewhere are encouraged to view their studies as an experiment, open-ended and creative. The science center, with adequate laboratory facilities including a new computer, provides the student virtually unlimited access to the tools of the trade.

For those students who choose to major in science the emphasis may be in the field of biology (including environmental sciences), mathematics, chemistry or physics, or in meaningful combinations of these fields. In some cases offerings of other faculties may be part of the major, e.g. anthropology, psychology, architecture, music or art. An extremely low ratio of students to faculty in the natural sciences encourages an interaction that goes beyond the transmission of facts, and the competition notable elsewhere is here replaced by cooperation in exploration. The close relation to other divisions engendered by Bennington's size and dedication to the liberal arts also broadens science beyond the narrowly scientific to embrace the wider fields of human knowledge.

The degree is offered in science rather than in the field of emphasis. In addition to work of advanced calibre in the chosen field, the student is expected to have a working knowledge of at least two related sciences, and to be able to integrate the knowledge gained in all the sciences studied. The areas to be included depend on the student, the field of choice and the judgment of the science faculty.

28 Social Science

Courses and tutorials offered in the social sciences are concerned with all aspects of man in his relationships with his unique creation, human society.

The Social Science Division includes the disciplines of anthropology, early childhood, economics, history, philosophy, politics and psychology. Each of these subject areas has its special techniques and terminology, which serve to simplify investigation and facilitate communication. Students will find no jealously guarded boundaries between these disciplines, but neither will they find encouragement to "integrate" artificially all these subject areas by merely sampling here and there. All students who major in the social sciences are required to explore in depth at least two of these subject areas, or, alternatively, to work out a program of studies including work outside the division. Each student majoring in the social sciences is expected to devise and carry to completion a senior project.

While this project might include anthropological field work, laboratory research in psychology or even running for elective office, it always centers on writing: on the endeavor to assimilate investigation to personal intuition and then to communicate this internal synthesis to the external world. Through training in the craft of expository writing—papers replace exams in most courses—the student learns the essential and inseparable skills of description and evaluation. Papers, original creations in a way tests can never be, stimulate students' own ideas and demand constant revaluation of knowledge and belief. The teacher, whether historian, economist, or philosopher, is also engaged in this ongoing enterprise, and the student joins not as an observer but as a partner.

In these ways the student comes to know and respect evidence and learns to design experiments or investigations that can be understood and repeated by others. All work in the social sciences seeks to maintain a careful balance between individual imagination and disciplined skills. The aim of the division is to remove barriers to informed curiosity about man and society, and to provide the means whereby students may develop independently their own social philosophies.

Education is generally considered a preparation for something you'll do after the time spent in its pursuit. What is valuable about Bennington is that no one assumes you must know exactly what you'll do next. Rather than help you define some narrow niche for yourself, Bennington insists that you leave here equipped with something that will help you do anything in a full, rich way. You leave here with the romantic and curious notion that what is left for you to do and learn can be tackled head on.

Hodge Nessin

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We do get right down to it at Bennington, directly and immediately going to the central questions involved in painting, in working. We win through to the locating base, to the floor of the young painter's understanding, and nudge him to push out from there. Oh, it's done with all the pain and passion of any intimate enterprise, not unlike the route of a lovers' quarrel. It is no careless haranguing of process and intuition, but rather the awakening of an appraising, knowing, preferring sensibility.

Pat Adams
painter, teacher



Visual Arts

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The Visual Arts Division at Bennington has maintained the important distinction between "training" and "education," thus confirming the appropriateness of the position of art in a liberal arts context. This has eliminated the art school approach and has made courses in literature and science, for example, relevant to work in the Visual Arts.

The faculty are motivated by their passion for the subject they teach. Students work with practicing artists in architecture, art history, ceramics, drawing, painting, photography, printmaking and sculpture. The emphasis is primarily on studio art. Most classes are run as critiques in a workshop environment with student work providing the basis for discussion and analysis of issues and processes in art. Students develop the ability to assess their own work as well as that of others.

The recently completed Paul Feeley Art Center provides the students with extraordinary working space. The large workshop areas are simple and flexible in structure. Although there are specific locations for each discipline where equipment is stored and students gather for critiques, the shape and use of the space in the Art Center changes regularly with the changing needs of the students.

An integral part of the Art Center is the Usdan Gallery. Since its inception, Bennington has brought historic and innovative art exhibitions to the area. Jackson Pollack and Barnett Newman had their first retrospectives at the College. The Usdan Gallery promises to strengthen this tradition by enabling faculty to bring interesting and influential shows to the College. Students are given regular opportunities to exhibit in this and other less formal exhibition areas in the Visual Arts building.

32 Interdivisional

Because students design programs with regard to the development and coherence of their own interests, areas of concentration frequently fall wholly within no single division, but rather between or among several. Students who realize, at the end of the second year, that their interests lie in two divisions or who wish to combine disciplines from disparate divisions may be Interdivisional majors; a large number of students in recent years have chosen such programs. Interdivisional majors are required to include senior projects in their programs of study. They may do non-integrated projects, one term in each discipline, or may choose to combine the disciplines in a single, full-year project.

In a sense, all students pursue interdivisional programs, for no student works entirely within a single division. Bennington's conception of a liberal arts education includes the belief that no field of study is self-sufficient, nor foreign to the interests and aims of other disciplines, and the natural interaction among divisions encourages students to investigate the manifold relationships which unify the most diverse types of knowledge. But some students pursue paths apparently divergent, or not previously well-marked, and the alternative of an Interdivisional major is designed to satisfy their needs. Like tutorials, the Interdivisional major is a means of access to goals not less highly valued for their lack of formal designation. It broadens the curriculum beyond that reported in any list of courses or historical sampling of student accomplishments. It guarantees the reality of education designed for and by students, of programs personal and not prescribed. The real diversity of Interdivisional majors abolishes all limits to the exercise of a student's own imagination and energy.

To insure a responsiveness to the individual student while yet interpreting the demands of a given discipline, an ad hoc committee composed of faculty sponsors of the student's Plan, in conjunction with the Educational Counseling Committee, oversees the programs of Interdivisional majors.



I was just going through the college catalog looking for descriptions of all the courses I took here. I couldn't find them. Then I remembered why I had it so good: I took tutorials. Tutorials are fantasy courses. You get to know the faculty in your division and talk to them about what you want to study and how and why. You work out with them what you need from the educational process and a tutorial is constructed around subject matter or techniques you feel you need to acquire.

Alex Rowan





Organization ³⁵
of Study

36 The Educational Program

It is the task of students at Bennington to develop an individual program based on their own capabilities and motivations. Following the principle that the goal of education is to render choice informed and purposeful, and that learning occurs best through doing, students are encouraged to choose for themselves programs of study by constructing from abundant possibilities an education of personal coherence and meaning. This process of educational self-direction takes place, however, under the guidance of a faculty which believes in exposing students broadly to the arts, sciences and humanities. Thus, although choice of program is each student's own, it necessarily reflects the College's dedication to a tradition of liberal study. The curriculum is flexible enough to take account of the important differences between individuals and broad enough to promote the student's understanding of our complex culture. We recognize and champion the fact that personal achievement and social responsibility are intertwined.

No specific courses are required for any program of study, but there are some basic educational expectations which students meet in designing their programs. Students are required to pursue work (at least one term) in at least four divisions during their first two years, and to complete one year's work beyond the introductory level in three disciplines, two of which may be within the division of their major, by the time of graduation.

Beyond these broad structural requirements, and with the advice of faculty counselors, the choice is left to the student. The extent of this freedom of choice, and its consequent responsibilities, are evident throughout the student's academic career. The journey to graduation is not merely some pre-established obstacle course of class requirements and minimum grades. Rather, students constantly examine and evaluate their progress and its meaning against the criteria of their own goals and the Bennington Idea.



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More than at most schools, the person who approaches his education and the people around him passively will be miserable. If you are lazy, you will find Bennington students cloaked in their legendary individuality and unfriendliness. But if you extend yourself, you'll find a good many friends here. The same holds true for your education at Bennington. Not very much is handed to you here, but there is a lot for the asking. It is neither very difficult nor satisfying to coast through your classes and receive a mediocre education. Teachers will soon turn off to you and pressure will evaporate. But with some effort, it is possible to get an exceptional education. Bennington teachers secretly want to be stalked by their students. There are whole other classrooms here that must be aggressively discovered.

Michael Pollan

I think Bennington provides the needed opportunity for a very intense selfishness. I think this is something you have to face the minute you come here, and it's hard. You ask, "Why am I spending all this time on my interests? I don't even know what they are." Here you have a chance to create interests if you don't have them.

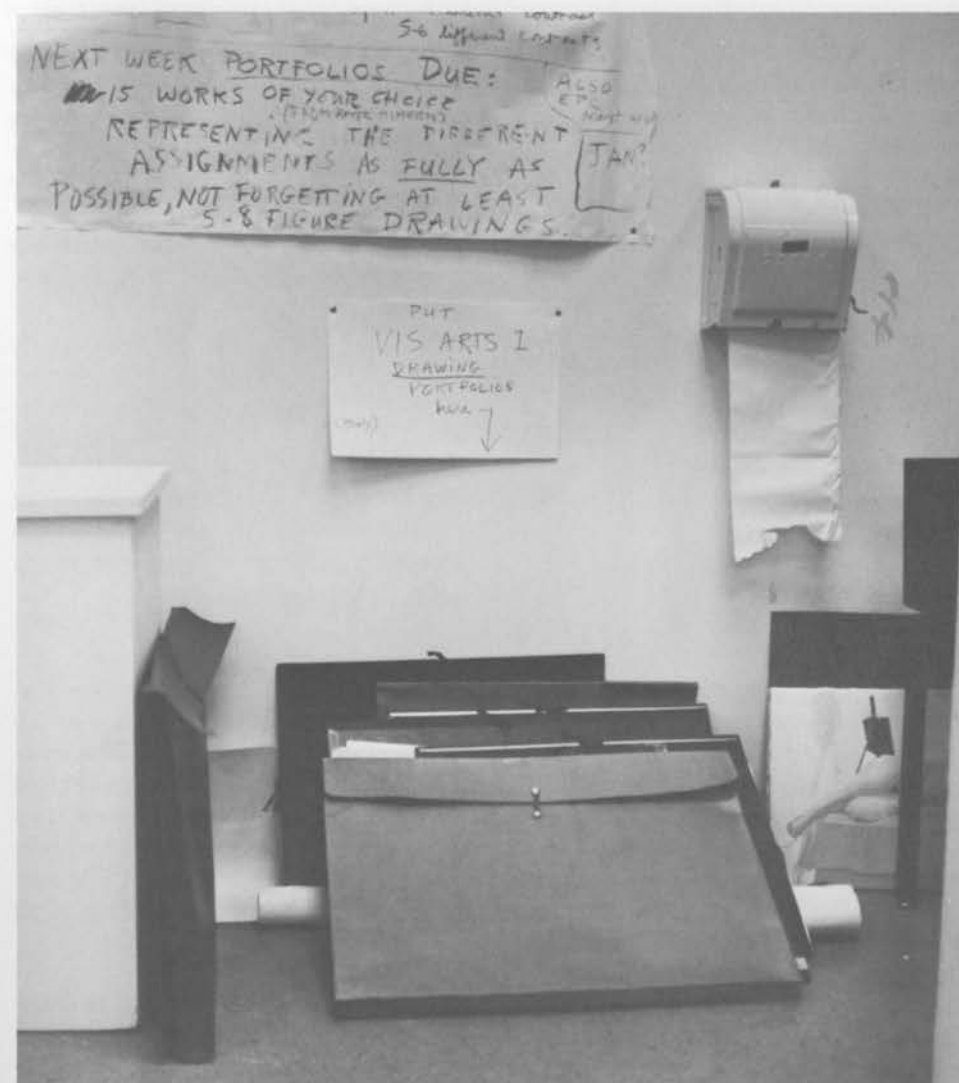


P: I find that teachers respond readily to enthusiasm.

B: Yes, aggressiveness is very important.

A: Well, that speaks badly for Bennington if you have to be aggressive to survive here.

D: You have to take a chance; in that respect Bennington is very much like the real world. It's more than just bulling your way into a course, it's forcibly extending yourself—taking that chance.



The Course of Study

40 Entering students choose a tentative schedule of courses, with the advice of faculty counselors, before classes begin. These course selections may be changed within the opening weeks of the term. Student programs ordinarily include four courses although, after the freshman year, a program consisting of three courses may be designed to allow work in greater depth.

The first two years are normally spent in wide-ranging exploration. In the last term of the second year, students formulate a Tentative Plan in which they make their own assessment of the educational experience to date, and project programs for the next two years at Bennington. The plan will indicate the student's focus in a single major area, either within one of the divisions or across divisional lines. Frequently, the Plans include independent reading courses or tutorials designed to explore areas not covered in the regular course offerings. These are not privileges awarded to some, but opportunities available to all. Students who intend to study abroad or at another institution are expected to incorporate these intentions as specifically as possible in the Tentative Plan. This taking stock can produce both anxiety and exhilaration: it is a student's major attempt to conceive education as a coherent whole.

These Plans for advanced work, which include a statement of educational purpose as well as a list of proposed courses, are submitted to the appropriate division and to the Educational Counseling Committee, a committee of faculty charged with upholding the policies and standards of the College, for final approval. This committee examines the student's total record for evidence of a capacity to do advanced work and a commitment not only to a specific area of concentration, but also to a broadly defined liberal arts program. The Committee looks for more than narrowly specialized talents or merely passing reports in all courses in approving the Plan; occasionally students may be granted further time in order to demonstrate their readiness to enter upon advanced work.

During the latter part of the third year, students prepare a Request for Confirmation of Plan in which they outline courses, tutorials and senior projects. Senior projects are substantial pieces of independent work developed with the guidance of appropriate faculty members; they may be theses, experiments, productions of dance or drama, concerts, or some combination of these. A senior project is more than a requirement for graduation. It is a chance to pull together the variegated knowledge, techniques and experience acquired through four years of work and study, and to focus them in a single, powerful moment of self-expression. The process is always traumatic; the result is often triumphant. The Confirmation of Plan is approved in much the same way as the Tentative Plan, and, if satisfactorily carried out, is regarded as fulfillment of requirements for the Bachelor of Arts degree.

In class here, moments come which generate incredible intellectual energy. New ideas actually arise in these classes, as the group is swept along and reaches for a certain perspective, a sense of the direction in which the work is moving.

Arlene Wyman
biologist, teacher



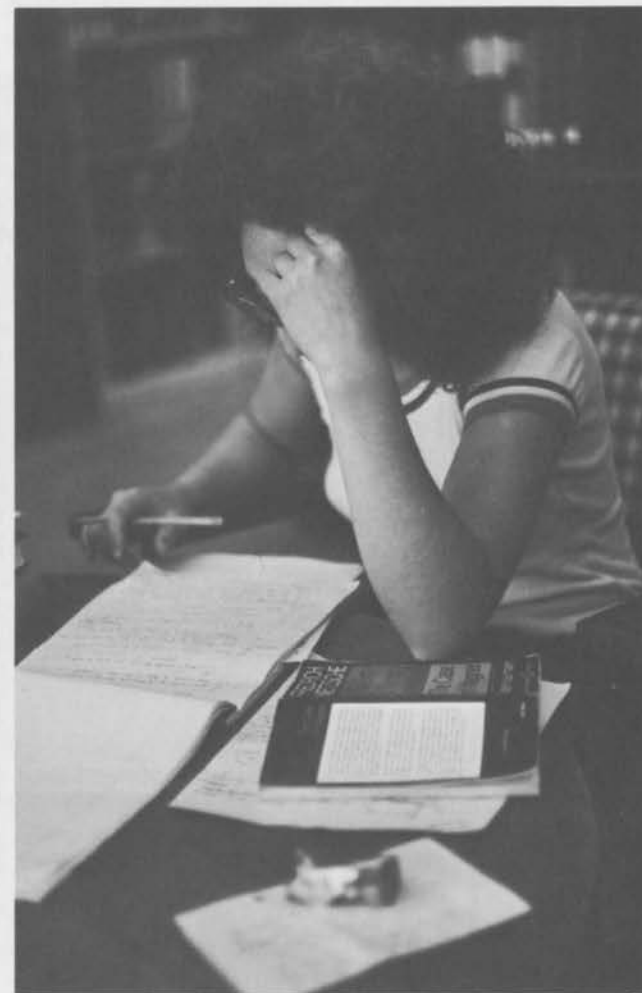
Barbara Kelley

It's strange talking to people from other schools and realizing that a lot of times they are afraid to talk in a class. Maybe we live under a kind of self-deception, but we usually feel that there is something valid about what we have to say. Certainly the teachers feel that way. I mean, we really feel as though we might come to something in a discussion which wasn't all mapped out beforehand.

Sunny Benenson

It took me a term here before I realized why people in my class resented only two weeks notice for a paper, when for me a week on one paper was perhaps a little short for a twenty pager, but absolute fanaticism for a five page paper. Not until my spring term did I discover the perhaps semi-masochistic ecstasy of working on a paper so that it didn't simply splash out, but letting it spill *in* until it starts to flow out. Papers are taken seriously here, and it is important to realize this.

42



43

44 Evaluation

Students at Bennington discover quickly that the truest measure of educational progress is the knowledge of what each student is contributing to and taking from the course of study. This individual evaluation is, of course, open to the interpretation of the instructor, the other faculty members who see the individual's work, and eventually to the Educational Counseling Committee.

It is, however, the student's ultimate responsibility to demonstrate the depth of interests, the sense of commitment to the subject matter at hand, a realization of the intellectual or artistic discipline demanded by that study. Instructors will be teaching subject matter of interest to them and they will expect each individual to respond accordingly. Faculty will discuss any difficulty a student may be having with the subject matter, but they expect their students to take the initiative in seeking advice.

There are no grades at Bennington. The faculty feels that grades can never represent the complex mixture of criticism, advice and encouragement that is crucial if the evaluation process is to serve an educational purpose. Evaluation of students' progress is not based upon a mechanical marking system, nor is it measured by competitive standing in a group. Each of the disciplines has its own standards of achievement by which student work is evaluated. These evaluations take the form of instructor's comments which examine each student's performance and ability. These written comments are distributed to students and their counselors at mid-term and at the end of term to facilitate assessment of personal progress.

Susan Bryant

When I was in high school, I got discouraged because I felt I was just working for grades—I was doing homework just because it was assigned, not to learn anything from it. That disturbed me. I talked to my guidance counselor and finally he said, "Maybe you ought to look into Bennington because they don't have grades and they seem to feel you ought to work for the sake of learning something more than for just getting it done." I did, and I decided to come here.

45



In most places, I just completed the assignment and felt OK, but here I write a paper and I feel like I could always do a little more research; I'm never quite content. Because what I'm doing I'm doing for myself, not for an assignment.

Colm Dobbyn

46 Faculty Counselors

The existence and role of the faculty counselor is of fundamental importance in the educational process at Bennington. This relationship between faculty and student provides an opportunity for intellectual interchange beyond that possible in the classroom. On the one hand, the counselor provides the student with information about academic policies and procedures; on the other, the counselor is someone to whom the student can speak about courses, future academic plans, everyday problems, difficulties with a particular paper or project—in short, anything of interest or importance to the student.

New students are assigned a counselor before they arrive on campus. Later in the year or in years following, students can request to have as a counselor a faculty member with whom they will do extensive course work. By the senior year, the counselor usually becomes the project advisor.

What I remember most about Bennington, in addition to my friends, is the quality of the human beings who taught me. I was surrounded by excellence.

Sally Smith '50

47



There is almost no such thing as sliding by in anonymity or losing oneself in large lecture courses.

Amy Spound

Non-Resident Term

48

Bennington adheres to the belief that study at college should be directed toward free yet disciplined self-development. Exposure to the opportunities and limitations of the world outside are considered an essential part of this project. Students therefore spend nine weeks each winter away from the campus in non-resident work activities. This Non-Resident Term falls between the fourteen-week Fall and Spring terms.

It is difficult to convey the excitement and the frustration, the inevitable disappointments and the unexpected rewards, the depth of experience and the sense of accomplishment which characterize the Non-Resident Term. It can be a time for career preparation: gaining first-hand knowledge of the work world, building a resumé, winning that "experience" which every job demands and no college can supply. Or it can be an exploratory excursion into the Real World: attacking an unfamiliar environment, finding a place to live and a means of support, building much out of little. It can be a way to make ends meet. Or it can be a chance to live out a dream: navigating the Colorado River, playing in a band, writing on some deserted beach.

The only limitations—for NRT or the whole of a Bennington experience—are those presented by a student's own energy and imagination. Non-Resident Term experience teaches students valuable lessons about the world and their places in it. It mitigates the isolation of a small Vermont campus by offering the entire world to explore; it enhances the value of Bennington's commitment to personal development through contrast with a reality that can be cold and harsh. Active, off-campus work is the necessary counterpoint to the academic term's speculative study and is proof that no education is complete unless it teaches the necessary interdependence of personal development and responsibility to the world at large.

Non-Resident Term work is done on a full-time basis. Students are not required to work in any specific field but are encouraged to find jobs that complement their academic studies. The Non-Resident Term is an integral part of the students' college program, and successful completion is necessary for graduation. Each Fall, students work out an NRT plan with the assistance of their counselors and the NRT staff. Although many students choose to find their jobs, the NRT staff solicits job offers and searches for housing. Students themselves report in detail on their activities, as do their employers or project supervisors. These reports form a part of the cumulative academic record upon which the degree is awarded.

When I first thought of coming to Bennington, the NRT terrified me. I thought that getting a job would be impossible and securing housing even harder. Well, it's not the easiest thing to arrange your winter while trying to keep up with the things you ought to be doing here during your fall term, but I have found that a few good hours of research backed up by a lot of letters and finally a trip for interviews results in at least two positions, one of which has always been desirable.

Beatrice Dohrn



49



50 The Degree

In many ways, it is easier to begin Bennington than to finish it. Applicants for admission are accepted largely on their attitude—the manifestation of that motivation and self-discipline which are essential to unstinting creative effort. Candidates for the degree must show specific evidence that they have evolved productively in the acquisition of new skills, in the growth of self-knowledge, and in the higher level of self-expression that is proof of lessons learned.

The Bachelor of Arts degree is awarded upon successful completion of a student's work as projected in the Plan and judged by the appropriate division. Each candidate is also evaluated by the Educational Counseling Committee which determines whether the whole of a student's record represents the quality and substance of work that the Bennington degree implies.

Thus graduation signifies more than a successful accumulation of courses or credits. Bennington offers each of its students the opportunity to develop the capacity to make clear and critical judgments, to foster self-reliance and to develop a deeper understanding of the human purposes knowledge should serve. Conferral of the degree is Bennington's recognition that graduates are ready to apply their education to the wider compass.

Margo Ashwilder

I think that if the acquisition of a degree is someone's sole objective, certainly they are not suited for Bennington. You have to go through so much in order to get this degree—you have to go through a metamorphosis within yourself.



51

I'm reading more, and writing more, and practicing the piano more than ever in my life. It's because for the first time they all seem part of my life.

a freshman

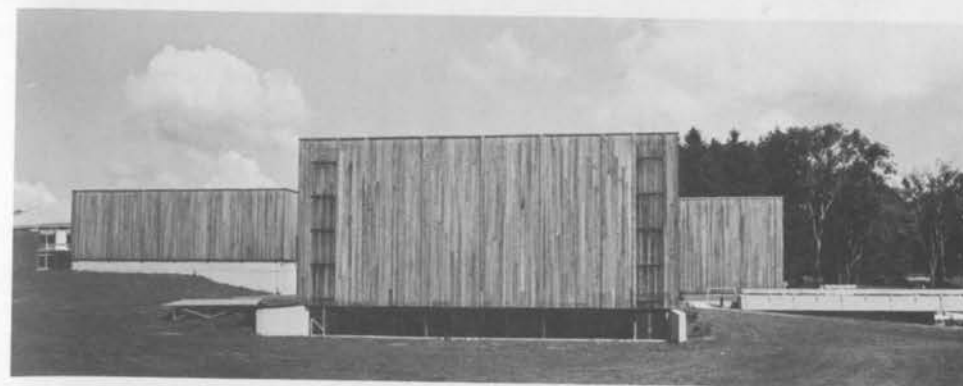


52 After Bennington

Is a liberal arts education useful preparation for life? Because at Bennington the process of education is itself considered a worthy end, the relevance of the question is challenged. Nevertheless, we answer in the affirmative. We believe that the ability to think for oneself, the goal of a Bennington education, is the best—because the least contingent—preparation for a future in which change can be the only constant.

How do Bennington graduates employ this “preparation,” their education? In ways as diverse as they themselves are, a diversity nurtured by Bennington’s encouragement of personal development. Although it enjoys great success with law and medical school applications, Bennington is not a pre-professional factory, nor is it a funnel to graduate school, despite the ready welcome graduates find in distinguished graduate schools across the country.

One literature major becomes a newspaper reporter; another does graduate work in sculpture. A music major writes for television. New York City has been called Bennington’s graduate school but Greece, Hawaii and Alaska all claim recent students. The point is, graduates resist categorization even more than students. For both are engaged in the same exercise: self-development through active engagement with their environment. Graduates have an even wider field of opportunity, if one sometimes less congenial, than students at Bennington, and the greater challenge both confirms the value of the Bennington experience and provokes even greater effort and accomplishment. The most true thing one can say of Bennington graduates is that they labor in their own vineyards, no matter where they are, and though they share the wine that results, it always bears the distinctive taste of an original.



People often ask me, “But does Bennington prepare you for later life?” I seldom have the nerve to tell them that life usually asks much less of you than Bennington did. I live these days in a world that is full of certainty; at Bennington I won through certainty to achieve doubt. I am trying to maintain some of those doubts still.

Samuel Schulman '72



Kate Buzzell There are instances of students who have gone to graduate school and left immediately because of the quality of thinking that goes on. Clearly they were looking for something better, for something that completed what Bennington had to offer. Again, maybe that is why Bennington makes it harder, a lot harder, to settle for half a loaf.



General Information

56 Location

The College is located in the southwest corner of Vermont near the New York and Massachusetts borders, four miles from the town of Bennington and one mile from the village of North Bennington. The campus is a three and one-half hour drive from New York and Boston and can be reached by public transportation from all points.



Lisa Schilit I find that the country setting generates an energy that would be hard to duplicate elsewhere. Although I rarely make the time to tromp through the woods or frolic in the fields, I find it comforting to know that they surround me.

There is a beauty about the College that sometimes surpasses all understanding. I think I knew when I was a freshman, but now my mind hazes. As one finds one's work, becomes more and more involved, one ceases to be *at* Bennington and becomes instead a part of it. One fits in, becomes a piece of the puzzle.

Tina Davidson



57



58 The Campus

The College occupies 550 acres of hills, woods and meadows which were formerly a farm. The stone manor is now the home of the Music and Black Music Divisions; across the meadow, the several barns serve as classrooms and offices. There are fifteen residences, white clapboard with slate shingles; each has rooms for about 30 students, with kitchens and large central living rooms. They are laid out, in the New England manner, around two sides of a central green. On the third side stands ivy-bricked Commons, location of the dining halls, the post office and infirmary, and a lounge. The fourth side, open, looks out over a valley to Mt. Anthony, foothill to the Green Mountains.

Facilities for study include a library of 75,000 volumes, a science center, and a recently completed visual and performing arts complex with 120,000 square feet of studios and rehearsal halls, galleries and theaters. There is virtually unlimited access to these working spaces.

The physical environment—with all the delights and inconveniences of rural New England—is a powerful influence. There are Falls of almost blinding brilliance, and early Springs when the campus seems drowned in mud. A walk in a meadow late at night offers unbroken quiet, unmatched clarity. In one sense this beauty is paid for with isolation, but the absence of distractions provides ample opportunity for thought, study and practice. In another sense, the solitude is threatened by the very beauty that causes it: the call of the country itself is ever able to lure students from their books.

The houses here are friendly little wooden structures much unlike the cinder block caves in which students at larger schools struggle in vain to maintain consciousness. It's really more like being a member of a big, incestuous family than just another fish in the pond (or just another number in a dwelling unit).

Hardy Kornfeld



59

Laurie Ruth Moss

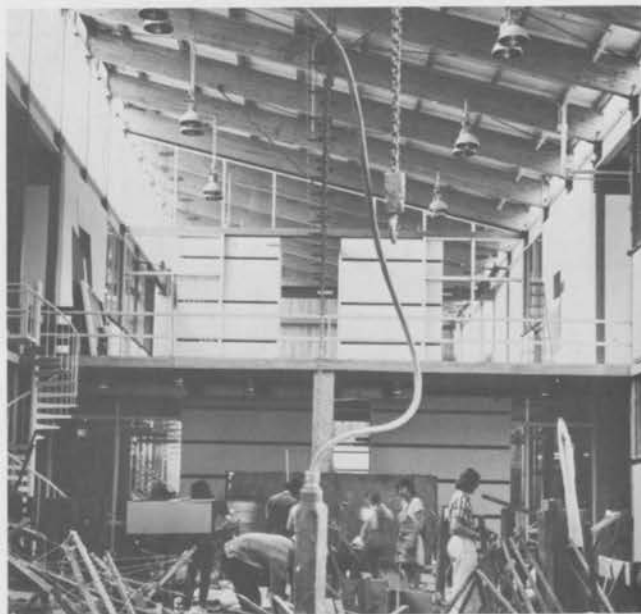
Each house possesses a specific personality, ranging from the rowdy party type to the echoing tomb.





Amy Sawelson

The new, giant Arts Center still has a few bugs in it, but for the most part it is a very functional and flexible building. The thing I like about it is that you can always watch what other people are doing when you are sick of what you're doing yourself. When standing in the three-story-high galleria, you can see five studios: graphics, sculpture, and ceramics on the bottom floor, and a painting studio and a drawing studio on the second floor. Not only is this arrangement convenient, it makes for a feeling of camaraderie.



On nice days, people laze around Commons Lawn. People toss frisbees, fending off dogs who also hang out on Commons Lawn and enjoy a good game of frisbee. Occasionally, a ballgame gets organized. People attempt to study amidst the dogs, frisbees, baseballs and footballs. Musicians play, dancers dance, artists sketch.

On foul days, few people venture outside. An occasional slickered figure scurries across the lawn. Some wet dogs yelp at their cohorts.

Lisa Ross



Student Life

62

Because students at Bennington are individuals actively pursuing artistic and intellectual goals of intense importance to them, there is little distinction between the curricular and the extracurricular at Bennington. The College boasts no fraternities or sororities, no formal athletic teams, no duly constituted clubs or organizations. Since students work at what they care most about within the classroom, most of their activity outside it is closely related. The result is intense and varied creative activity by students, faculty, and frequent guests: concerts of music, performances of dance and drama, readings and discussions all vie for attention.

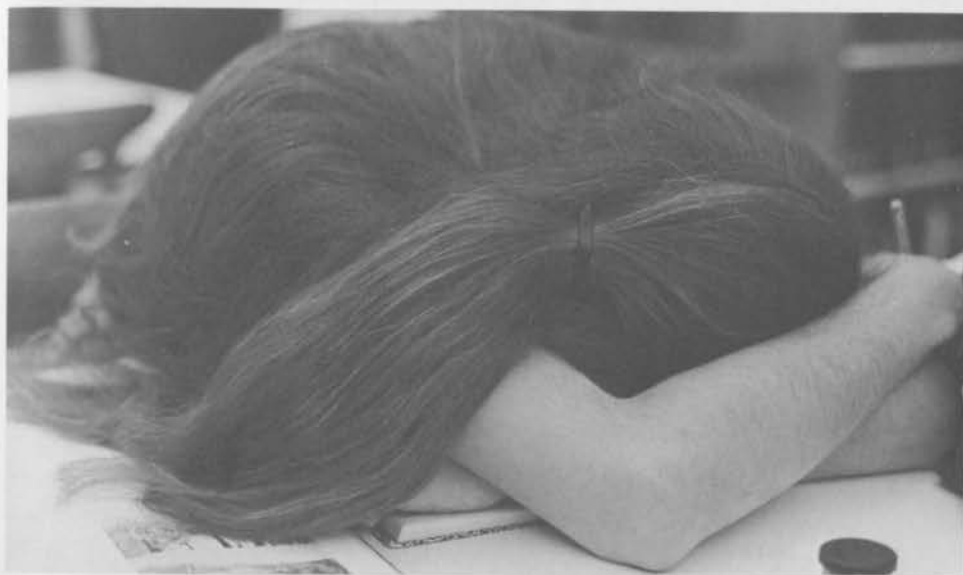
There are, of course, movies (old favorites and obscure experiments, at least two each week), and the parties are unusual only in the intensity they share with the rest of college life. But activities at Bennington are the result less of organized enthusiasm than spontaneous exuberance. Soccer, tennis and softball teams arise, flourish and fade away with the rise and fall of student interest. A café run entirely by students sprang up two years ago and has persisted through three incarnations and complete changes in staff, clientele and character. A newspaper currently publishes six issues a year. Nightclubs showcasing community talent surface once or twice a year. Yet the future of these things is as full of uncertainty as their past is of changes.

This activity is generated by a student body currently composed of about 400 women and 200 men. Most of the United States are represented, with the largest share of students coming from the Northeast, especially metropolitan New York and Boston. But California is fifth on the list of States, and ten percent of the students come from countries other than the United States. Hearsay often characterizes the Bennington student body as intense, eccentric and pretentious. Indeed, a community intent upon the principles of self-government and respect for individuals is guided more by sensible and considerate behavior than by an elaborate set of regulations. And the value given to individual self-development permits and to some extent even encourages unconventional ways of being. Students here undertake primary responsibility for their own lives on campus, no less than for the direction of their own educational programs, and the result is a diversity unusual for a community of our size.

This diversity fuels the activity, and it is through participation in the activity—whether as actor or spectator, in class or out—that education takes place. Loneliness and boredom are dangers, but result primarily from a student's own lack of involvement, for while the possibilities for activity are numerous and varied, their engagement must be the student's own choice. If life at Bennington is intense, it is because students choose with wholehearted courage; if the life is rich, it is because they choose widely and well. Here, unlike institutions of greater bulk and inertia, the quality of life is daily determined by the actions of those who compose it.



63





I transferred to Bennington from a large university hoping to escape mediocrity. Well, I escaped. Of all the adjectives used to describe this place, "mediocre" usually isn't one of them. I wanted to be surrounded by musicians and artists and people sincerely interested in their work, and the great thing about Bennington is that students are excited about what they're doing.

There are times—for instance, when I'm standing out on Commons Lawn alone at night and the stars are out and it's so beautiful I could die—when this sort of self-indulgence becomes isolating. It's then I almost wish I was back at old State U., rotting away in the warmth of mediocrity. But most of the time I'm glad I'm here.

Jan Cherubin



I don't think I've ever heard anyone refer to a student here as a "nurd" or a "grind." Rather than receiving the conventional denunciations, hard-working little gnomes are widely considered worthy of adulation. Work is a fetish here. Whatever social hierarchy there is at Bennington is largely constituted according to academic and artistic accomplishment. This is what people admire. Work occupies a central place in everybody's life.

Michael Pollan



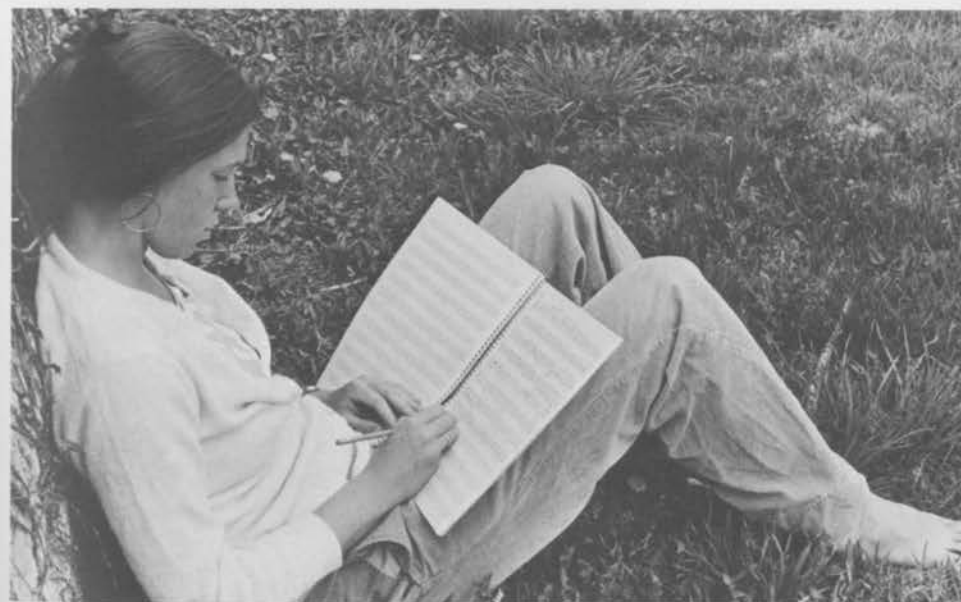


Tamio Spiegel

Because This Place is so small and We all live here, we cannot avoid seeing each other in what would be considered elsewhere "private moments." We see each other eating, and dealing with the dining hall (which is another thing entirely), we see each other drunk, depressed, overjoyed, etc., etc. It's very hard to be here for a while and not become known. Bennington is an excellent place to come for your allotted fifteen minutes of lifetime fame.



Obviously, if you're husband-hunting this isn't the place to do it. Being a woman in a woman-centered college can be a very positive experience. You learn to respect women here, and at the same time you learn to respect yourself as a woman.



Heidi Jon Schmidt

Bennington for me has been a place where learning consisted of reaching out for everything. My grasp has extended to dancing to every song at Friday night parties, reading the complete works of Oscar Wilde, trying to talk faster than my thesis tutor, and watching people pick up their mail. It has been a euphoric, solipsistic, utterly devastating experience, but I certainly can't recall ever having been bored.

68



The social situation? Well, possibly I'm not a good person to ask since my experience here has been unusual—but I suppose that sums it up right there. *Everyone's* experience here is unusual since there are no social norms to which you are expected to conform. It is harder this way because you cannot rely on things like Standard Patterns of Accepted Behavior to tell you what to say next. It takes a lot of energy to be so *original* in your relationships. It makes me tired sometimes but here is what makes it worth the effort: I can have it the way I want it.

Anita Roach

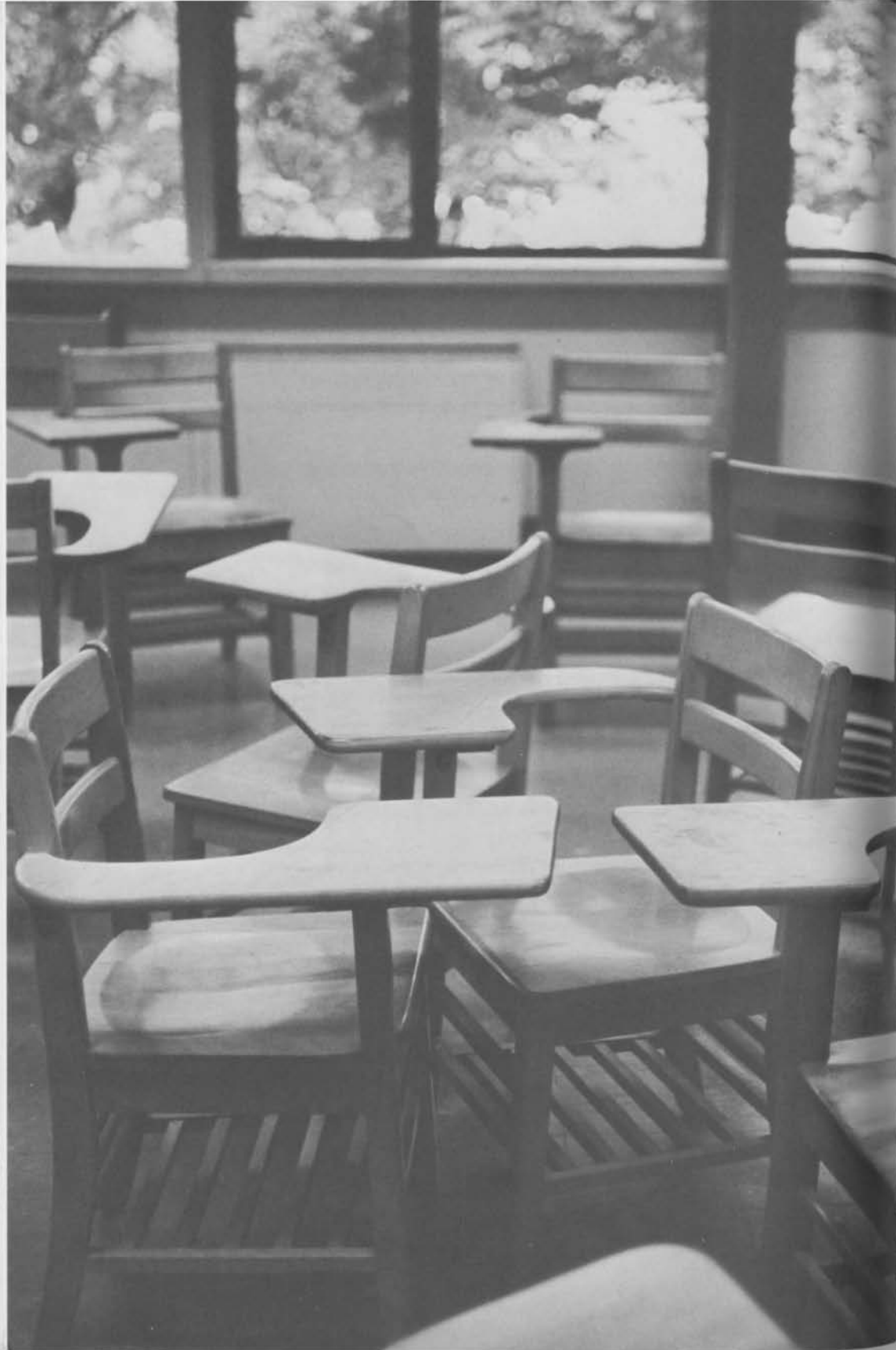


69



I've always wanted to serve sardines in Jello for Coffee Hour, which probably says more about me than it does about Bennington. (Don't worry, by the time you get here I will have been graduated.)

Carol Raskind



Bennington seeks students who are able enough to meet its rigorous academic challenge, resilient enough to profit by real work experience, creative enough to weave the two into a unity, and motivated enough to value the effort as its own reward. In judging an application, evidence of the promise of these qualities is weighed almost as heavily as their previous manifestation. In these days of narrowing horizons, the inclination to pursue the goals Bennington values is more than ever worthy of nurture. The purpose of the application process is to insure the best possible match between applicant and college. Beyond this, Bennington College admits students of any race, color, sex, national and ethnic origin.

Admissions 71

72 Application Procedures

Because an education at Bennington demands more than academic competence, we attempt to gain as complete and personal a picture of each applicant as possible. Each candidate has the opportunity to present an individualized case for admission—through a written Personal Statement, the submission of records, and a personal interview.

In many ways, the Personal Statement is the most important part of the process because it gives applicants the opportunity to present themselves in their own complexity. It is supplemented by a biographical information sheet, a statement from the applicant's parents, and recommendations from both a guidance counselor and a teacher. The school record is viewed within the context of the whole application. Interviews are required. If applicants can visit the campus during the term—which is strongly advised—they meet with both a member of the Admissions staff and a current student. (Interviews can be arranged in the local area if the candidate is unable to come to the campus.) Submission of standardized test scores is considered helpful but is optional, and candidates are invited to provide the Admissions Committee with other kinds of supplementary information (papers, slides, projects, tapes, etc.).

The Admissions Committee will evaluate each application as soon as all parts are received; applicants are notified of the Committee's decision as soon as possible.





Transfer Students

Bennington encourages applications for transfer from students with strong records and sound reasons for transferring. We have found that students with experience elsewhere are often especially well-equipped to take advantage of Bennington's freedom and emphasis on self-motivation. Each year, about twenty percent of new students are transfers from other institutions.

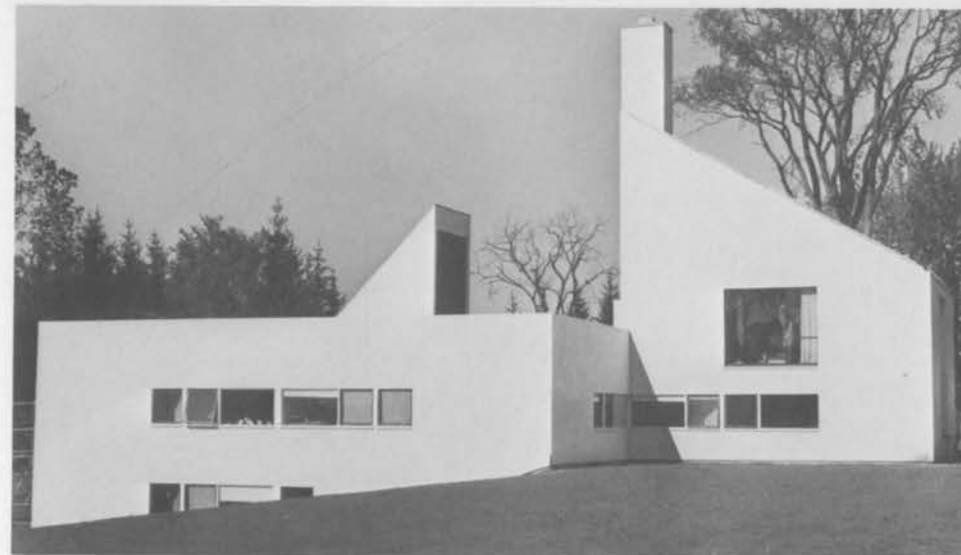
It is important that transfer students know that, in keeping with the College's view that education is not a mechanical process, work done elsewhere is evaluated in light of work done at Bennington. We do not routinely count the credits earned at other institutions, but see the student's prior work in the context of the work done at Bennington. Most transfer students do graduate "on time," but occasionally a student is asked to spend more time in pursuing the degree.

Students who have done two years' work elsewhere should be aware of the need to plan the major soon after entrance and are asked to come to campus so as to meet with faculty in their field(s) of interest. Students in the writing disciplines should submit work in their proposed fields; students in the visual arts should submit slides or a portfolio.

76 Fees and Financial Aid

Bennington charges its students a single fee for tuition, room and board, and all on-campus services. The fee is truly comprehensive in that there are no extra charges for music lessons, the use of the library or graduation. For 1978-79, the comprehensive fee is \$7,540.

The College provides about \$500,000 in financial aid in addition to money available to students from various federal and state programs; about thirty percent of the student body receives aid. Except for some regular College jobs, all funds are given on the basis of need as defined by the College Scholarship Service.



77





These pages are designed to give you an appreciation of what Bennington is today. As you can see, the struggle for self-knowledge—the Socratic project—is the heart of Bennington's educational philosophy. The methods of the College are designed not only to prepare students for this endeavor but also to engage them in it—every day!

This process results in an education which is broadly based and deeply personal. It offers the curious mind more than a mere choice of future roles; it points the way for the individual to go beyond roles and cement a richer foundation for the future. Students at Bennington come to know themselves; they do not leave the College simply resigned to adapt to the world's demands, but rather determined to use the opportunities the world provides to their fulfillment and its improvement.

Afterword

B: I have the feeling that one of the reasons it is so highly-charged is that people at Bennington are interested in what they are doing. I think that people are excited here.

A: Do you think that people would stay here if they weren't excited by what they were doing?

K: I think it would be harder to stay if they weren't. I keep thinking about myself, mostly, and how easy it would have been to go to another school where I might have gone
80 through four years without really getting prodded into doing some of the thinking I've done here.



K: You have specifics at other schools; you know, certain things that you have to get over, certain hurdles so that you can think you're accomplishing something. Well, here you have no way of measuring yourself.

B: You are fighting against your own potential here.

T: Right, all the time.

B: Yes, and it's rough.

A: I think probably that's one of the most difficult things about Bennington—the pressure you have to put upon yourself to fulfill your goals. I always felt that it is *your* pressure.