

Report from Bennington College
to the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
November 20, 1992

Introduction

Since last year's report to NEASC there have been a number of changes at Bennington College. In recognition of the absence of desired growth in undergraduate enrollment and an unwelcome increase in institutional financial aid awards, the Board of Trustees at its April 1992 meeting mandated permanent expenditure cuts. It also directed the president and the deans to devise an enrollment strategy which would lead to an annualized enrollment of 550 undergraduates by 1996/97. Finally, it authorized additional spending from Capital Campaign proceeds for the period during which the abovementioned actions will be carried out. The Board statement on these matters is attached as Appendix D.

The goal of these Board actions is the attainment by 1996/97 of financial stability which foresees a reasonable increase in undergraduate enrollment, a decrease in institutional financial aid and no budgetary reliance on the Capital Campaign other than the spending of endowment earnings. Bennington has taken the first steps toward that goal.

Enrollment and Financial Aid

Bennington's undergraduate enrollment has declined from an annualized count of 576 in 1988/89 to a budgeted enrollment of 485 in the current academic year (see Appendix C). Actual fall enrollment, with a count of 509, was 5 greater than budgeted, making achievement of this year's budgeted level of annualized enrollment likely.

The decline in enrollment has been steady as entering classes of approximately 170 (the entering class this fall was precisely 170) have replaced classes which numbered 190 or so. This is not good news for an institution such as Bennington where revenues from undergraduate enrollment account for three-quarters of all operating revenues. Nonetheless, four years of entering classes of 170 does establish a baseline enrollment of 485 below which Bennington is not likely to fall.

As enrollment has fallen, the level of institutional financial aid has also, in the last two years, become an object of concern. The last two entering classes have had a higher proportion of need than their recent predecessors, bringing the expenditure for institutional aid to a level which is unsustainable over the long term. Institutional financial aid in 1992/93, as a percentage of total revenue derived from undergraduate enrollment will be approximately 34%. It was 28% last year and had been held to 25% or less in the three years previous to that.

In response to the unfortunate convergence of underenrollment and oversubscribed financial aid, Bennington has responded by mounting a substantial effort, known as the Enrollment Project, every bit as intense and focussed as the ongoing Capital Campaign. With the assistance of McKinsey & Co., a national management consulting firm, and Anthony Knerr, a well-known educational consultant, Bennington is in the process of rethinking and reconfiguring its admission and marketing efforts.

The obvious aims of this strategy are to increase the applicant pool without diminishing quality. Focus and cultivation are keys to success.

Bennington is, and will be, concentrating on a carefully selected segment of its inquiry pool, specifically those unsolicited inquiries which suggest the most active interest. We will, as a matter of course, continue to respond in traditional ways to all inquiries and to invite applications from all qualified candidates. In addition, however, through telephone inquiry and a newly-inaugurated Alumni Partners Program, we will seek out and cultivate in a personal way that smaller share of any market which makes up the most promising prospects.

There are several other examples of a redoubled admission effort: the introduction of an early action program, an expansion of oncampus Open House programs, faculty visits to secondary schools. It is the combination of these and other efforts previously described which we believe will enable Bennington to reach the enrollment targets for new students displayed in Appendix C.

Retention is another important factor in increasing Bennington's enrollment. Although buoyed by the experience of the last two years, we nonetheless recognize that continuing attention to this concern will always be necessary. This year Bennington assigned a specially

selected group of faculty as counselors (Bennington's version of academic advisors) to first year students. These counselors have met not only with their counselees, but also, on a regular basis, amongst themselves and with the deans. We expect next year to have in place a first year program which, while academic in nature, will also act as an extended period of orientation and socialization for the new Bennington student.

We also hope to see both retention and recruitment marginally helped by the extremely small increase, 2.9% effective this fall, in Bennington's comprehensive fee. This increase dropped Bennington from first to fifth in its total charges for tuition and other required fees.

In addition to undergraduate enrollment, Bennington derives some revenue from two programs which we have successfully enlarged this year. Our Post-Baccalaureate Program in the Sciences grew from 10 students in fall 1991 to 16 students this fall and our masters' programs, offered in three disciplines, grew to 18 this fall from 11 last fall. We see some modest expansion in these programs in each of the next few years and expect to offer new programs at the master's level in both writing and drama no later than the fall of 1994.

Downsizing the Institution

Application numbers in March 1992 made clear that new student enrollment in the upcoming fall term would differ little from that of the previous year and that, consequently, overall enrollment would fall somewhat from the 1991-92 level of 500. Given that reality the Board reluctantly concluded that it could no longer await a turnaround in enrollment and that some permanent reductions were in order. Its rationale and mandate are more fully explicated in the Statement of April 7, 1992 (Appendix D).

The administrative savings ordered by the Board took cognizance of the permanent elimination of certain administrative positions which had occurred over time beginning in August 1990; other positions were eliminated in April 1992. In all, there are now fifteen fewer nonfaculty positions, a reduction of approximately 10% of that workforce.

Difficult as the administrative cuts were, the process for obtaining permanent cuts in the faculty was, not surprisingly, more complicated. Recognizing the lead time required to carry out these reductions with minimal disruption, the Board has allowed a two year period before their implementation must be completed. It was also sensitive to the form and the substance of this decision-making process in giving this task to a Steering Committee composed principally of faculty. The faculty members, all of whom accepted the Board's invitation to serve, were the entire membership of the two existing faculty personnel committees.

The Steering Committee's report (Appendix E) was transmitted to the Board for consideration at its June 1992 meetings, where it was unanimously adopted. The Board was grateful to the Committee for its thorough and timely work, which resulted in recommendations which will minimize the injury which these reductions will cause to Bennington's academic program. In accordance with the report of the Steering Committee, some of the mandated cuts will occur next academic year, with full implementation in 1994/95.

Important as downsizing Bennington may be, the Board and all College constituencies clearly recognize that these cuts, both academic and administrative, will not make Bennington financially stable without a simultaneous recovery in enrollment and a scaling back of financial aid. As we move forward on these fronts, the continuing success of the Capital Campaign stands out as a bright spot.

Capital Campaign and Endowment

The Capital Campaign continues on schedule. As expected in last year's report to NEASC, the Campaign reached its halfway point, \$15 million in gifts and pledges, by June 30, 1992. As also expected, the Campaign added an additional \$1.4 to Bennington's endowment, putting it over \$6 million. It should be noted that Bennington's endowment exceeds its long-term debt for the first time in at least twenty years.

The Board's decision to use additional Campaign funds in support of the budget is a reasonable reallocation of these funds given the financial realities Bennington faces. In so doing, the Board did not lose sight of the importance of maintaining the integrity of the Campaign. An excerpt from the Board's statement of April 7 reads:

"While the Board is willing to continue allocating some Campaign funds to provide the time and opportunity to increase enrollment, it also recognizes that the duration of such allocation must be limited, that the total of this allocation cannot exceed available funds, and that it cannot jeopardize the success of the Campaign by failing to honor the commitment to contribute a minimum of \$15 million to endowment."

Conclusion

It is clear that the four variables which the Commission's letter of September 8 asked us to address are critical to Bennington's future. We hope that this report reveals the extent of our appreciation of the situation and our determination to face it with resolve and realism.

Appendices

Appendix A: CIHE Data Forms

Appendix B: Capital Campaign Status

Appendix C: Enrollment Table

Appendix D: Board Statement of April 7, 1992

Appendix E: Steering Committee Report

Appendix A: CIHE Data Forms

CIHE DATA FORM I. CURRENT FUND REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES (000 OMITTED)

Please use attached definitions

FISCAL YEAR ENDS	3 YEARS PRIOR	2 YEARS PRIOR	1 YEAR PRIOR	MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED FY	CURRENT BUDGET
MONTH <u>6</u> DAY <u>30</u>	(FY 19 <u>89</u>)	(FY 19 <u>90</u>)	(FY 19 <u>91</u>)	(FY 19 <u>92</u>)	(FY 19 <u>93</u>)

CURRENT FUND REVENUES RESTRICTED & UNRESTRICTED

1) TUITION & FEES	9,468	9,584	10,065	10,175	10,291
2) GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS					
3) GOVERNMENT GRANTS & CONTRACTS	345	443	457	492	444
4) PRIVATE GIFTS, GRANTS & CONTRACTS	1,590	2,012	2,051	2,587	2,938
5) ENDOWMENT INCOME	214	232	275	349	400
6) AUXILIARY ENTERPRISES	2,767	2,884	3,036	3,020	3,196
7) OTHER	177	178	198	166	150
8) TOTAL REVENUES	14,561	15,333	16,082	16,789	17,419

CURRENT FUND EXPENDITURES RESTRICTED & UNRESTRICTED

9) INSTRUCTION	3,612	3,863	4,013	4,190	4,216
10) RESEARCH					
11) PUBLIC SERVICE					
12) ACADEMIC SUPPORT	655	733	896	804	873
13) STUDENT SERVICES	1,061	1,079	1,136	1,304	1,246
14) INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT	3,052	3,257	3,571	3,614	3,663
15) OPERATION, MAINTENANCE OF PLANT	814	968	983	889	928
16) SCHOLARSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS	2,987	3,081	3,111	3,731	4,344
17) MANDATORY TRANSFERS	347	327	327	327	327
18) NONMANDATORY TRANSFERS	265	106	104	436	0
19) AUXILIARY ENTERPRISES	1,626	1,647	1,642	1,577	1,618
20) OTHER					
21) TOTAL EXPENDITURES	14,419	15,061	15,783	16,872	17,215

22) REVENUE LESS EXPENDITURES	142	272	299	(83)	204
23) REVENUE LESS EXPENDITURES NOT INCL AUXILIARY ENTERPRISES	(999)	(1,035)	(1,095)	(1,526)	(1,374)

24) TUITION AND FEES CHARGE FOR FULL TIME UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT	15,670	16,495	17,790	19,400	19,780
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CIHE DATA FORM II. CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES AND INDEBTEDNESS (000 OMITTED)

FISCAL YEAR ENDS MONTH 6 DAY 30 3 YEARS PRIOR (FY 1989) 2 YEARS PRIOR (FY 1990) 1 YEAR PRIOR (FY 1991) MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED FY (FY 1992) CURRENT BUDGET (FY 1993)

CURRENT-UNRESTRICTED

FUND BALANCE BEGINNING OF YEAR	(5,477)	(5,214)	(4,892)	(4,639)	(4,438)
NET INCREASE/(DECREASE)	263	322	253	201	201
FUND BALANCE END OF YEAR	(5,214)	(4,892)	(4,639)	(4,438)	(4,237)

CURRENT-RESTRICTED

FUND BALANCE BEGINNING OF YEAR	741	620	570	616	331
NET INCREASE/(DECREASE)	(121)	(50)	46	(285)	3
FUND BALANCE END OF YEAR	620	570	616	331	334

LOAN FUNDS

FUND BALANCE BEGINNING OF YEAR	0	0	0	0	0
NET INCREASE/(DECREASE)	0	0	0	0	0
FUND BALANCE END OF YEAR	0	0	0	0	0

ENDOWMENT & SIMILAR FUNDS

FUND BALANCE BEGINNING OF YEAR	3,700	4,177	4,339	5,081	6,631
NET INCREASE/(DECREASE)	477	162	742	1,550	1,400
FUND BALANCE END OF YEAR	4,177	4,339	5,081	6,631	8,031

ANNUITY & LIFE INCOME FUNDS

FUND BALANCE BEGINNING OF YEAR	0	0	0	0	0
NET INCREASE/(DECREASE)	0	0	0	0	0
FUND BALANCE END OF YEAR	0	0	0	0	0

PLANT FUNDS

FUND BALANCE BEGINNING OF YEAR	13,327	13,834	4,120*	4,092	4,317
NET INCREASE/(DECREASE)	507	368	(28)	225	232
FUND BALANCE END OF YEAR	13,834	14,202*	4,092	4,317	4,549

INDEBTEDNESS ON PHYSICAL PLANT * implementation of FASB93

BALANCE OWED ON PRINCIPAL AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	7,120	6,780	6,525	6,170	5,755
ADDITIONAL PRINCIPAL BORROWED DURING YEAR	0	90	0	0	0
PAYMENTS MADE ON PRINCIPAL DURING YEAR	340	345	355	415	430
BALANCE OWED ON PRINCIPAL AT END OF YEAR	6,780	6,525	6,170	5,755	5,325
INTEREST PAYMENTS ON					

CIHE DATA FORM III. STUDENT ADMISSIONS DATA (fall term) - Credit Seeking Students Only
Including Continuing Education

Fall Term (Year)	4 years ago (19 <u>88</u>)	3 years ago (19 <u>89</u>)	2 years ago (19 <u>90</u>)	1 year ago (19 <u>91</u>)	Current year (19 <u>92</u>)
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Freshmen

Completed Applications	601	467	517	484	476
Applications Accepted	369	330	386	367	339
Applicants Enrolled	175	133	138	143	143
Statistical Indicator of Aptitude of Enrollees used by Institution (describe below)					

Transfers - Undergraduate

Completed Applications	60	79	75	68	77
Applications Accepted	24	51	50	48	56
Applicants Enrolled	19	36	28	30	27

Master's Degree

Completed Applications	29	21	31	23	40
Applications Accepted	9	1	2	9	21
Applicants Enrolled	9	1	1	8	8

**First Professional Degree
All Programs**

Completed Applications	15	36	47	40	80
Applications Accepted	8	3	12	12	30
Applicants Enrolled	7	3	7	8	14

Doctoral Degree

Completed Applications					
Applications Accepted					
Applicants Enrolled					

Description of statistical indicator of aptitude of freshmen enrollees (average combined SAT, average rank in high school graduating class, etc.)
Middle 50% of all enrolled freshmen - Verbal 513-650; Math 440-580; of those enrolled,
43% came from the top 20% of their graduating class.

CIHE DATA FORM IV. STUDENT ENROLLMENT DATA (fall term) Credit Seeking Students Only, Including Continuing Education

		4 years ago (19 88)	3 years ago (19 89)	2 years ago (19 90)	1 year ago (19 91)	current year (19 92)
Undergraduate						
First year	Full-Time Headcount	181	144	145	150	159
	Part-Time Headcount	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Headcount	181	144	145	150	159
	Total FTE	181	144	145	150	159
Second year	Full-Time Headcount	165	167	126	133	139
	Part-Time Headcount	0	0	0	1	0
	Total Headcount	165	167	126	134	139
	Total FTE	165	167	126	133.25	139
Third year	Full-Time Headcount	144	160	142	110	113
	Part-Time Headcount	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Headcount	144	160	142	110	113
	Total FTE	144	160	142	110	113
Fourth year	Full-Time Headcount	103	105	156	126	98
	Part-Time Headcount	4	0	1	0	0
	Total Headcount	107	105	157	126	98
	Total FTE	104.75	105	156.5	126	98
Unclassified	Full-Time Headcount	1	0	0	0	1
	Part-Time Headcount	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Headcount	1	0	0	0	1
	Total FTE	1	0	0	0	1
Total Headcount Undergraduate		598	576	570	520	510
Total FTE Undergraduate		595.75	576	569.5	519.25	510

Graduate

	Full-Time Headcount	8 7*	8 6*	3 8*	11 10*	18
	Part-Time Headcount	0	0	0	0	0
Total Headcount Graduate		8 7*	8 6*	3 8*	11 10*	18 16*
Total FTE Graduate		8 7*	8 6*	3 8*	11 10*	18 16*

* Post. Baccs

Grand Total Headcount		606	584	573	531	544
Grand Total FTE		603.75	584	572.5	530.25	544

CIHE DATA FORM V. PROJECTED FINANCIAL, TUITION, and ENROLLMENT DATA
For Next Three Years

Fiscal Years FY FY FY
 1993 - 94 1994 - 95 1995 - 96

Projected Financial Data (000s omitted)

Total Current Fund Revenues	18,200	18,900	19,700
Total Current Fund Expenditures (including Mandatory Transfers for Principal and Interest)	17,900	18,600	19,400
Revenues less Expenditures	300	300	300
Other Transfers	(100)	(100)	(100)
Change in Current Fund Balance	200	200	200

Year 1993-94 1994-95 1995-96

Projected Tuition and Fees Charge for Full-Time Student	20,700	21,800	22,900
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Projected Enrollment - Fall Term

(Credit Seeking Students Only, including Continuing Education)

Year 1993 1994 1995

Undergraduate

Full-Time Headcount	525	548	564
Part-Time Headcount	2	2	2
Total Headcount	527	550	566
Total FTE	526	549	565

Graduate

Full-Time Headcount	22	30	36
Part-Time Headcount			
Total Headcount	22	30	36
Total FTE	22	30	36

Post-Baccalaureates 20 25 30

Appendix B: Capital Campaign Status

The Campaign for Bennington

Standards of Giving Necessary for \$30,000,000

\$5,000,000 1

\$2,000,000 1

\$1,000,000 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

\$500,000 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Gifts and pledges in support of The Campaign for Bennington now total \$15,151,969

\$250,000 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 12 11

\$100,000 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

\$75,000 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This chart represents the numbers and levels of major gifts needed to achieve our objective of \$30,000,000

\$50,000 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 25 24 23 22 21

\$25,000 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 35 34 33 32 31

\$15,000 50 49 48 47 46 45 44 43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The 256 shaded blocks represent gifts and pledges at the listed levels

\$10,000 70 69 68 67 66 65 64 63 62 61 60 59 58 57 56 55 54 53 52 51 50 49 48 47 46 45 44 43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 75 74 73 72 71

Appendix C: Enrollment Table

													3/30/92
			FULL TIME UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT										
			ACTUAL THROUGH SPRING 1992										
			PROJECTED 1992/93 - 1996/97										
	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91		1991-92		1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
FALL TERM													
CARRYOVER FROM PRIOR TERM	408	458	456	471	448		387		371	386	399	411	427
NOT RETURNING	78	87	75	93	76		59		57	59	59	60	63
RE-ENTERING	19	26	19	29	31		18		20	18	18	18	18
NEW	212	188	193	169	166		173		170	180	190	195	195
ENROLLMENT	561	585	593	576	569		519		504	525	548	564	577
DECEMBER GRADUATES	13	19	10	17	24		16		23	14	19	19	22
SPRING TERM													
CARRYOVER FROM PRIOR TERM	548	566	583	559	545		503		481	511	529	545	555
NOT RETURNING	60	66	65	53	61		48		44	48	50	53	55
RE-ENTERING	24	24	25	19	20		12		15	12	13	15	14
NEW	17	25	16	7	10		14		14	14	14	15	15
ENROLLMENT	529	549	559	532	514		481		466	489	506	522	529
JUNE GRADUATES	71	93	88	84	127		110		80	90	95	95	
ANNUALIZED ENROLLMENT	545	567	576	554	541.5		500		485	507	527	543	553

Appendix D: Board Statement of April 7, 1992

April 7, 1992

STATEMENT FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
BENNINGTON COLLEGE

This statement is intended to convey to the Faculty of Bennington College the substance of the actions the Board has resolved to take in order to respond to the impact on the College of the fiscal and demographic pressures affecting higher education nationally. Carrying out these actions in a way that maintains the integrity of a Bennington education will require the involvement of Faculty, Students, and Administration, as well as the Board. We begin with history.

Following a prolonged period of financial pressure during the early 1980's a sustained program of conservative fiscal management and successful fundraising enabled the College to reach the point where an annualized enrollment of 600 would constitute a satisfactory steady state. This steady state would allow sustained salary increases, adequate maintenance and renewal of the physical plant, and the opportunity to continue to build an endowment capable of providing a reasonable measure of long-term fiscal stability. However, since 1988 enrollments have declined from a high of 576 to a projected annualized enrollment for the coming academic year of 485. This decline, combined with an increase in the financial aid needs of entering students, will leave a short-fall in 1992/93 between revenues and expenditures of over \$1.5 million. Moreover, were it not for a series of permanent adjustments begun in 1990 to reduce administrative costs, that short-fall would be even higher.

For the coming academic year (1992/93) the budgetary imbalance will be corrected by temporary cutbacks in the faculty budget, an additional infusion from the Capital Campaign over and above what was to be allocated toward operating expenses, and further administrative cuts. These are, of necessity, short-term measures and it is now evident that permanent structural adjustments in the budgetary baseline are necessary to bring expenditures in line with the realities of enrollment.

It is also evident that such budget adjustments alone will not suffice to meet the magnitude of the need without undermining our ability to sustain educational quality. An annualized enrollment of 485 is not a feasible steady state for the College and enrollment must increase. While the Board is willing to continue allocating some Campaign funds to provide the time and opportunity to increase enrollment, it also recognizes that the duration of such allocations must be limited, that the total of this allocation cannot exceed available funds, and that it cannot jeopardize the success of the Campaign by failing to honor the commitment to contribute a minimum of \$15 million to endowment.

Hence, the Board of Trustees resolves that reductions in expenditures from the 1990-91 baseline budget be accomplished as follows:

- 1) There be a permanent reduction in administrative expenditures of no less than \$450,000, to be fully implemented by the beginning of 1992/93.
- 2) There be a permanent reduction of no less than eight full-time equivalent faculty positions resulting in a permanent reduction in faculty expenditures of no less than \$350,000 that would begin to go into effect in 1993/94 to be fully implemented by 1994/95.

In addition the Board of Trustees resolves that increases in income be accomplished as follows:

- 3) There be a reallocation of Capital Campaign proceeds of \$1.275 million in 1992-93, and that, beginning 1993-94, an additional allocation be made not to exceed \$2 million to be distributed over no more than four years.

To assure that the adjustment in the size of the faculty be accomplished in an orderly way and one which maintains short and long-term educational quality, the Board looks to recommendations as to the particulars through a process that involves maximum collaboration between the duly constituted bodies of the Faculty, the Academic Council, the Academic Deans, the Divisions, the Student Educational Policies Committee, and Administration. To effect this collaboration and recognizing that sensitive personnel matters are at issue, the Board has asked the President to convene a Committee consisting of the Faculty Personnel Committee, the Faculty Personnel Review Committee, the Academic Deans, and the Vice President for Finance and Administration. This Committee will be responsible for steering the process and making final recommendations to the Board. The Board recognizes that procedural details are properly the business of the Committee, but would expect that its members will consult regularly and most particularly with the Academic Council, and with representatives from the Divisions. The Board also recognizes that direct student participation is properly limited in personnel matters, but it does ask that efforts be made to apprise students of the process and to consult with the Student Educational Policies Committee representatives when appropriate. While the Board hopes this process will achieve consensus, it recognizes that legitimate differences may remain and the Board will make every effort to consider such differences in its deliberations.

In order to conclude this process by the completion of the current academic year, the Committee recommendations must be submitted to the Board by May 21, 1992.

In the interests of enabling the College to continue business as usual the Board will ask the Faculty Personnel Committee to proceed with its review process concerning the renewal of faculty appointments. The Board will act on Faculty Personnel Committee recommendations involving the renewal of contractual commitments subsequent to acting on recommendations concerning the particulars of the adjustment in faculty size.

It must be emphasized that the adequacy of these resolutions is premised on an increase of enrollment within four years to the point where expenditures do not exceed revenues from tuition, routine annual fundraising, and endowment income. Our estimate is that with the above adjustments in the budget that will require an annualized enrollment of approximately 550. If we are to accomplish an increase of this scale and maintain the quality of students, attention must be devoted both to the retention as well as to the recruitment of students. In the Board's judgment successful strategies for enrolling new students depend on senior administrative leadership. Plans are already being developed regarding recruitment that would integrate administrative offices and utilize each of the constituencies of the College. Such strategies may include major alterations of orthodox recruitment efforts and will surely require new orders of coordination, careful planning and highly focused efforts.

Equally in the Board's judgement, successful strategies for improving retention depend on faculty leadership both in their planning and in their implementation. A certain amount of attrition is undoubtedly necessary and even desirable, but Bennington cannot afford to lose students from a failure to create a milieu in which every student who has the intellectual, imaginative, and emotional capacity to benefit from a Bennington education can thrive. This may mean that faculty members need to expand their involvement in College life outside the classroom. It may mean that teachers become actively engaged in colleagues' and students' work in disciplines and divisions other than their own. Life at Bennington may need to become more integrated and collaborative in order to amplify and harness the considerable human resources present here. But it surely will mean that the College needs the faculty as a whole to commit to leading this enterprise by developing a strategy and organizing its implementation.

Hence the Board of Trustees resolves that:

The President be requested to continue to structure and implement a recruitment planning process and that the academic deans work with the faculty to structure and implement a retention strategy designed to achieve an enrollment of no less than 550 students (annualized) by 1996/97.

Finally, the Board would ask that efforts currently underway to expand existing programs other than the undergraduate college (the July Program, Writer's program, Post Baccalaureate in Science and Pre Medical Studies, Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts, Dance, and Music) and to develop new programs (Master of Fine Arts in Drama and Writing, and an Institute for Graduate Studies) be pursued as aggressively as possible.

Appendix E: Steering Committee Report

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

MEMORANDUM TO: Board of Trustees, Bennington College

FROM: Steering Committee: Elizabeth Coleman
for Ronald Cohen
Terry Creach
Mansour Farhang
Kenneth Kensinger
Daniel Michaelson
William Morgan
Neil Rappaport
Barbara Roan
Susan Sgorbati
Allen Shawn

DATE: June 1, 1992

RE: Faculty Reduction Recommendations

Pursuant to the Board's mandate of April 7, 1992, President Coleman convened a Steering Committee comprised of the members of the Faculty Personnel Committee and the Faculty Personnel Review Committee, the Academic Deans, and the Vice President of Finance to recommend a College-wide reduction in the size of the Faculty. In our initial meetings, the inherent tension between the charges of the two personnel committees - the FPC is obliged to give primacy to the concerns about the institution, while FPRC upholds the rights of individual faculty members interacting with institutional authority - resolved itself in our compliance with the accompanying general guidelines for retrenchment at Bennington College. Their basic configuration represents an amalgamation of AAUP guidelines with more specific and idiosyncratic reflections of the College's reality. We agreed to maintain a dynamic sense of the points at which FPRC might withdraw from the deliberations in order to maintain its impartiality for a subsequent grievance procedure: whenever Steering Committee discussions moved toward matters upon which an individual grievance might be based, FPRC would sound an alert by offering to remove itself.

The Steering Committee quickly realized that the tension between institutional and individual values and rights was precisely the dilemma of our mandated responsibility: assigning faculty cuts which did the least harm to the College's educational integrity, while maintaining the academic and contractual rights of individual faculty members. We recognized the extreme difficulty of discussing the College's curriculum without raising issues pertaining to individual faculty performance. From the same tension between institution and individual arose the principle of convergence which guided the Committee's work and deliberations throughout the process. Stated simply, we sought out - and, at times, sought to create - faculty positions where limited curricular harm coincided with "natural attrition" and existing vacancies.

The process of establishing eight such convergences was by no means simple. During the first weeks after the Board's mandate, the Steering Committee met with various College-wide constituencies - the Faculty, Academic Council, SEPC, individuals - to elicit both formal and informal guidance for the establishment of curricular criteria. We also began discussing the various data pertaining to course offerings, enrollments, and distribution of faculty resources in the light of the emerging criteria. At the same time, we deliberated on several alternatives proposed by individual faculty members, proposals which suggested less permanent approaches than discontinuation for half of the eight reductions - through a College-wide voluntary leave program. While appealing from the standpoint of avoiding the permanent elimination of positions, these suggestions foundered on the inherent randomness of such an approach from the standpoint of curriculum and year-to-year scheduling, and were thus held in abeyance pending our extensive analysis of the overall College program.

The series of discussions following this first phase of evolving criteria and data-gathering moved directly to the intensive discussion of specific divisions and disciplines. We became aware that the mix of criteria was very fluid, arising in very different articulations as we examined particular areas of the College's educational program. Because small divisions like Dance and Drama could not endure extensive reductions without sacrificing their programmatic integrity, large divisions would have to bear a greater burden of retrenchment. Large divisions' programmatic integrity often was strongly associated with the presence of more than one practitioner in a discipline, while, for medium and small divisions, reductions in faculty resources would often necessitate the discontinuation of a discipline. Some divisions had many retirements in the near future, providing the prospect of an internal accommodation to reduced resources. Other divisions had little or no such curricular maneuvering room. As we examined particular disciplines, our various educational ideals - concentrated by discussions with Academic Council and SEPC - flowed into the mix of criteria. We contended with issues of presumptive tenure and contractual obligations, as well.

Our specific decisions similarly emerged gradually. Individual members of the Steering Committee continued to meet with individual faculty members and, in one instance, with a division, seeking to discover voluntary individual decisions which could provide potential areas of convergence. Our internal

method was a reiterative polling, meeting after meeting, of the committee membership, each of us defending a list of reductions, each pushing the others toward the required eight.

DANCE DIVISION

The Dance Division (6 $\frac{1}{8}$ faculty) provided the first definite reduction of one position through a combination of voluntary reductions of $\frac{1}{4}$ position each by Tony Carruthers, Martha Wittman, and Susan Sgorbati with the discontinuation of a support staff position in Audio/Video, which the Division had been considering for some time. In the new definition of Tony Carruthers' position, many of the functions of the discontinued support staff will be incorporated into a curricular offering in Video. This leaves a total of 5 $\frac{1}{8}$.

DRAMA DIVISION

The Drama Division (5 $\frac{5}{8}$ faculty) was exempt from faculty reductions due to the strong convergence of large enrollments with a very small number of faculty positions. The Steering Committee discussed a possible reduction of one-half a position in Acting, since there was a possibility of a voluntary reduction, but concluded that if such a vacancy occurred, it would have to be replaced. This leaves a total of 5 $\frac{5}{8}$.

VISUAL ARTS

The Visual Arts Division (10 faculty) presented the dual problem of vigorous enrollments and a proliferation of one-person disciplines, so extensive cuts would eventuate in the elimination of ongoing activities and the curtailment of the major in Visual Arts. The growth of the Division's MFA program further argued for limiting reductions. At the same time, the fragmentation of positions in the Art Division seemed to indicate that bits and pieces of positions might be discontinued without significant educational harm. Since present vacancies in Sculpture (1), Art History ($\frac{3}{4}$), Photography ($\frac{1}{4}$), and Architecture ($\frac{1}{4}$) provide considerable maneuvering room without discussing individual faculty members, the Art Division will determine the approach to reducing its faculty by one-half position in the forthcoming weeks. This leaves a total of 9 $\frac{1}{2}$.

NATURAL SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

Analysis of enrollment patterns and equity suggested that the Natural Sciences and Mathematics Division (8 faculty) should be reduced by one position, though the Steering Committee was deeply concerned about the impact of any cut on the Division's programmatic integrity on both the undergraduate and post-baccalaureate level. We raised questions about the need for three biologists, concluding again that the Division's original arguments remained persuasive. Rein van der Linde's intention to retire by Fall, 1994 afforded a vacancy in Mathematics. Informal discussions with members of the Division and the Steering Committee's own deliberations led to a sense that the curricular gap left by the discontinuation of one of the two positions in Mathematics could be addressed in the coming years. While some members of the Division are

capable of offering introductory level Mathematics courses, that is a compromised solution both for science and for mathematics. The Division, while committed to fulfilling the mandate of one cut, is still wrestling with finding the optimal resolution. This leaves a total of 7.

MUSIC DIVISION

In the Music Division (9 3/4 faculty), the Steering Committee's awareness of the prior reduction caused by Gunnar Schonbeck's retirement was an additional element in our deliberations. The general enrollment data urged the eventual cut of one position, while our desire to maintain the Division's commitment to the individual student-musician's relationship with individual faculty-musician argued against any further cuts. We debated whether to follow the advice of the Music Division's SEPC representatives to reduce the commitment in Composition or to locate the reductions in Instrumental teaching, concluding that the deepest creative ideals of the Music Division would be best served by discontinuing 1/2 position on the Instrumental side, in Piano and Voice, available as a result of retirements by Willie Finckel and Frank Baker respectively. This leaves a total of 8 3/4.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

The most contentious and passionate discussions arose over the reductions in the Division of Social Sciences (14 faculty). Before arriving at a decision to eliminate two-and-one-half positions, the Steering Committee considered the complete elimination of the teaching of Economics and the reduction of a range of Social Science disciplines to one person. We were initially confronted in the Social Sciences with the most extensive landscape of natural attrition: two positions in both History and Psychology and a possible position in Anthropology would become available during the next several years. We were also cognizant of an overall pattern of diminished enrollments as well as concentrations of quite small enrollments in specific areas.

The first decision to reduce the commitment in Psychology was a more or less obvious one: though enrollments are relatively vigorous, it was difficult to argue for three positions in Psychology at a time when other disciplines were reduced to single faculty members; moreover, during Ron Cohen's service as Dean of the Faculty, the Psychology discipline had been sustained by fewer than three faculty positions. The second reduction of one position in History was, by far, the most difficult to rationalize. Though enrollments in History have not been particularly strong in recent years, there was a conviction in the Steering Committee that the teaching of History was essential to the liberal arts ideal and that History had the special potential of serving as a truly synthesizing force in the College's educational program. To avoid the discontinuation of either History position, we examined other disciplines in the Division, placing special emphasis on Economics, where enrollments were small and the recent history of unreplaced faculty leaves suggested that the discipline could be sustained by one faculty member. Here our conclusion was strongly influenced by the fact that two tenured faculty members occupied the positions in Economics. After consulting with Michael Rock and Andrew Pienkos about their plans for the near future, the Committee understood that no voluntary convergence would be developed. The proposal to eliminate Economics

founded on our acceptance of its current geo-political significance, as well as our awareness of its connections to other Divisional disciplines. Finally, and regretfully, we decided to avail ourselves of the natural attrition in History by reducing the Division's resources in that area by one position.

We will urge the Division of Social Sciences to address this profound curricular issue as forthcoming vacancies occur. We believe the remaining half-time position in Anthropology should be dynamically allocated between the two most affected disciplines--history and psychology. In filling this position a strong preference was stated for hiring a person full time for a semester rather than one-half time for a year. This leaves a total of 11 1/2.

LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

Our decision to reduce the size of the Division of Languages and Literature (15 faculty) by two positions was based primarily on its size and its curricular homogeneity relative to other divisions. One position was achieved by the discontinuation of the vacancy created by Claude Fredericks' retirement. Though we were troubled by the loss of resources in classical literature and languages, other faculty resources in this area are available. The division invited Neil Rappaport to provide insight into the Steering Committee's thinking and procedures and subsequently presented the Steering Committee with a proposal to accomplish the mandated two position reduction through a combination of permanent individual voluntary reductions and a rotating leave program. The latter proposal was sufficiently vague as to give rise to scheduling and curricular problems: it effectively instituted a reduction in faculty salaries--a strategy rejected by the Board--and it did not provide for the sort of permanent reductions which constituted our mandate. At the same time, the Steering Committee was informed of Phebe Chao and Sandra Dunn's interest in moving from a full-time to a half-time status in the College. After assuring ourselves that both individuals were acting voluntarily during this resolution, we discussed the discontinuation of the vacated partial positions, concluding that the loss would be tolerable. We were, nonetheless, acutely aware of the implication that the reduction in the Spanish program would inhibit the development of an abroad program as well as the growth of the discipline on campus; we were also cognizant of the sacrifice of Phebe Chao's extensive thesis tutorial work with Senior Literature majors, in addition to her course offerings. This leaves a total of 13.

The Steering Committee arrived at this series of recommendations without ever reaching the point at which the FPRC's grievance role came into conflict with the committee's procedures, though there were at least several moments when FPRC members signalled that the discussion was moving dangerously into inadmissible areas. In each such instance, we found another line of discourse through which we could proceed. Since the Steering Committee never took any coercive action vis-a-vis individual faculty nor engaged in any deliberations which pertained to individual's performance, political activities, character or other impermissible concerns, it was not necessary for the members of FPRC to withdraw nor for grievance procedures to be undertaken.

The task ahead for the Faculty is profoundly challenging. This reduction of eight positions has an inevitably negative impact on the College's educational program. The Steering Committee's ability to maintain collegial morale through its application of the principle of convergence may be a mitigating factor, but new approaches to old educational problems must be undertaken in the context of constrained resources. The gaps in the educational program must be addressed through a commitment to curricular development in which, instead of creating new positions, the individual resources of present and new faculty members must be more fully mobilized.

APPENDIX

General Guidelines

- I. Steering Committee members will avoid discussing individual faculty members' performance, character, personality, or other impermissible concerns
- II. The President, the Dean of the Faculty, and the Vice President of Finance endeavor to negotiate retirement arrangements with all faculty members volunteering to retire or reaching mandatory retirement; all eligible faculty members should be routinely contacted and all possible incentives to a voluntary action should be offered
- III. The Steering Committee will collaborate with the Academic Council in the identification of curricular criteria for faculty reductions
- IV. SEPC and other organs of student governance will also contribute curricular plans vis-a-vis the reduced faculty size
- V. With curricular concerns as the essential guiding factor, the Steering Committee will decide which natural vacancies in the faculty (retirements, voluntary reductions, and vacant positions) will be discontinued
- VI. Discussion of alternative approaches to the remaining reductions (with FPRC present) which do not have an impact on individual faculty members will be undertaken
- VII. All Steering Committee discussions pertaining to individual faculty members will be undertaken by the FPC members of the Steering Committee in chambers, with the President ex-officio as a non-voting member
 - A. To the fullest extent possible the FPC will be governed by the normal rules of discourse, evidence, and decision-making which prevail in faculty reviews, including, but not limited to, confidentiality, access to personnel files, authority to interview any member of the faculty in the course of its deliberation of an individual position, disclosure of conflicts of interest by individual FPC members, and scrupulous avoidance of impermissible standards; proper areas for consideration of an individual faculty member include "competence in his/her field, professional activity, and teaching ability; responsiveness to student needs and interests, and contribution to working committees and other aspects of community life..." (Faculty Handbook, 9.42, page 37)

resolved with the President, Dean of the Faculty, and Vice President of Finance prior to the Steering Committee's decision-making phase

- B. After the Steering Committee's decisions have been conveyed to affected faculty members, FPRC considers their petitions for review

1. Grounds for FPRC Grievances

- a. adequate consideration ("The term 'adequate consideration' refers essentially to procedural rather than substantive issues. It does not mean that the review committee should substitute its own judgment for that of the personnel committee. Under the term adequate consideration the review committee is expected to ask questions like: Was the decision conscientiously arrived at? Was all available evidence bearing on the relevant performance of the candidate sought out and considered? Was there adequate deliberation of the evidence in the light of the relevant standards? Were improper and irrelevant standards excluded?" - Faculty Handbook, 9.44)
- b. The termination of appointment constitutes a violation of academic freedom or discrimination on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual preference, etc.

2. FPRC Grievance Procedures

- a. Aggrieved faculty member presents a brief specifying grounds for review in a meeting with FPRC - a faculty advisor may be present
- b. FPRC decides whether the faculty member's allegations have sufficient merit to warrant a full investigation
- c. FPRC interrogates members of the Steering Committee in regard to such allegations of inadequate consideration, violation of academic freedom, or discrimination
- d. FPRC hears any testimony directly relating to the nature of the consideration, to academic freedom, or to discrimination

- e. If an individual faculty member's grievance is upheld by FPRC, it reports its findings to the Steering Committee, which, after correcting the violation, reconsiders its decision
- C. If the Steering Committee recommends "the termination of an appointment with continuous tenure, or of a probationary or special appointment before the end of the specified term," FPRC conducts hearings, with the faculty members on the Steering Committee participating, on the existence of financial exigency
 - 1. AAUP: the burden of proof lies with the Administration.
 - 2. Steering Committee investigation of the grievance can include access to College budgetary information at as high a level of detail as possible; the Faculty Budget Committee and the Vice President of Finance would normally be asked to testify about the College's economic state
 - 3. In the event the Administration fails to prove financial exigency, the Steering Committee will report its finding to the Board of Trustees with a recommendation of austerity measures sufficient to maintain the College's financial balance
- D. Once grievances are resolved, the FPRC joins the full Steering Committee in a formal vote endorsing the package of decisions.